

Victor Privalov

THE YOUNG  
COMMUNIST  
INTERNATIONAL  
AND  
ITS ORIGINS



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**INTRODUCTION**

The young people of the world are becoming increasingly active in the working-class struggle with the passing of the years. They are strongly opposing wars, the bourgeois governments' attempts to overcome economic difficulties at the expense of the working people, and the reactionaries' onslaught on democratic gains.

The younger generation's actions reflect the profound crisis in modern bourgeois society. The International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, held in Moscow in June 1969, made a very accurate assessment of current events and youth participation in them. The Meeting's main document, entitled "Tasks at the Present Stage of the Struggle Against Imperialism and United Action of Communist and Workers' Parties and All Anti-Imperialist Forces", said: "Working youth, primarily young industrial workers, who are subjected to super-exploitation and see no prospect for themselves under capitalism, are entering the class struggle to an ever greater extent, joining the trade unions and communist and other democratic organisations. Broad masses of students take a stand not only against the defects of the obsolete system of education and for the right to organise and share actively in the affairs of educational centres but also against the policy of the ruling classes."



The International Meeting, which underscored young people's active participation in all the important mass movements against imperialism, rated the upswing in the youth movement very highly. At the same time it stressed that "only close unity with the working-class movement and its communist vanguard can open for them truly revolutionary prospects".

A study of the world youth movement's history, and also of the struggle for the consolidation of the international communist youth movement's unity and greater co-operation between the democratic youth of all countries, will be of great help in understanding the processes we are witnessing.

The international youth movement is an important component of the workers' and communist movement. At the turn of the century the process of drawing young people into the workers' revolutionary struggle was a difficult one. The bourgeoisie, with the whole system of youth education in its hands, tried to distract young people away from politics and blind them with homilies about public interests and peace between the classes. The employment of children and adolescents and their brutal exploitation forced young people to fight for the improvement of their economic position. After studying the experience gained by adult workers in their struggle, young people came to the conclusion that they should join forces and set up their own organisations. Such prominent leaders of the world revolutionary movement as Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin and Wilhelm Pieck helped the young people enormously in this respect.

For several years after their establishment, these youth organisations were under the ideological influence and organisational guidance of the

Social-Democratic parties of the Second International, largely as a result of which they had no clear-cut views on the economic and political struggle, and this prevented the youth movement in Western Europe from taking the road of the workers' revolutionary struggle. It must be noted, however, that even at this time the best young people, those who were resolute, courageous and capable of sacrificing themselves for the sake of victory, joined the progressive workers' ranks.

Young people played an extremely important role in all the stages of the working-class movement. They took an active part in all the workers' mass actions. Lenin pinned high hopes on the young revolutionaries and their participation in the revolutionary struggle, the road which he tried to help them take. In his letters and articles, he called on Party workers to encourage young people to join their ranks. This was one of the most important tasks facing the Party at the time.

The allegations made by such bourgeois historians as Ralf Fischer and Richard Cornell that Lenin "made little mention of the young people and their problems" until 1917 are a downright lie.

Lenin drew the Party workers' attention to the need to educate young people by practical work, and strongly attacked those who did not trust them owing to their inexperience. During the first Russian revolution of 1905, Lenin wrote: "The people in Russia are legion; all we have to do is to recruit young people more widely and boldly, more boldly and widely, and again more widely and again more boldly, *without fearing them*. This is a time of war. The youth—the students,



and still more so the young workers—will decide the issue of the whole struggle.”<sup>1</sup>

Lenin emphasised the need to attract young people into the Party and make them its reserve; he strongly and consistently fought against the deep-seated conviction that young people are a force which for the time being must be kept away from the political struggle.

Lenin, who was closely connected with the world working-class movement and later headed the international communist movement, devoted much attention to youth organisations.

When the question of anti-militarist activities was raised at the Stuttgart International Socialist Congress (1907), Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg foresaw the gigantic tasks which would face young people in the workers’ revolutionary struggle in the near future and stressed that youth must be educated in the spirit of internationalism.<sup>2</sup>

The world bourgeoisie, preparing to battle for the redivision of markets and territories, attached great importance to the growth and consolidation of the army. The workers had to step up anti-militarist propaganda among young people, who were liable to be called up for active service. Describing the experience gained in this work by the young socialist workers’ leagues, Lenin wrote: “Everywhere anti-militarist propaganda among young workers has yielded excellent results. That is of tremendous importance. The worker who goes into the army as a class-conscious Social-Democrat is a poor support for the powers that be.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 41, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *V. I. Lenin on Youth*, Moscow, 1970, pp. 153-54.

In support of this conclusion, Lenin cited the activities of the young workers’ leagues in France, Belgium and Austria. He wrote: “In France, the anti-militarist mood has become massive. During the strikes at Dünkirchen, Creusot, Loguivi, Monso-le-Min the soldiers ordered against the strikers declared their solidarity with the workers...”<sup>1</sup>

Lenin drew attention to the West European youth organisations’ achievements in spreading anti-militarist propaganda and winning over the army to the people’s side. He emphasised: “As time goes on, there are more and more Social-Democrats in the army and the troops become increasingly less reliable. When the bourgeoisie has to confront the organised working class, whom will the army back? The young socialist workers are working with all the enthusiasm and energy of the young to have the army side with the people.”<sup>2</sup>

Young people began to participate in the workers’ revolutionary actions on a mass scale during the First World War. The best young workers, free of petty-bourgeois illusions and reformism, protested against the wholesale slaughter of peoples and stood up for the unity of the internationalist elements in the world working-class movement during the trying years when Social-Democratic leaders openly joined the imperialist camp and many workers in the belligerent countries withdrew from the revolutionary struggle, swayed by their leaders’ betrayal and by the atmosphere of frenzied chauvinism.

During the war the celebration of International Youth Day (IYD) became especially important;

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



it was the young people's sign of protest against the ban on celebrating May Day (Working People's International Solidarity Day). Like all other young people's public protests during the First World War, International Youth Day was accompanied by the slogan "Down with the Imperialist War!". It was celebrated for the first time on October 3, 1915 in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, the United States, Rumania and Portugal by about 120,000 persons. Since then more countries have begun to celebrate it.

During the First World War young people were very active in all the workers' public protests. In Germany young workers took part in 1916 May Day demonstrations and the protest movement against Karl Liebknecht's arrest. In Italy members of socialist youth organisations filed through the streets on May Day with the slogan "Down with the War! Long Live the Social Revolution!" Many members of youth organisations and their leaders were arrested and tried for taking part in this demonstration and other actions.

The consistent and unrelenting struggle waged by Lenin, the Bolsheviks and the Left-wing internationalists sharply furthered young workers' participation in the revolutionary struggle in the West European countries. It promoted unity among them and helped to free them from the fetters of social-reformism and Right-wing social-traitors.

Many prominent Bolshevik leaders, living in emigration in the West European countries, took an active part in the youth movement during the First World War. They did not confine themselves to giving advice, but rendered practical assistance in the establishment of genuinely revolutionary organisations in these countries. Among

them were Georgy Chicherin in France, Alexandra Kollontai in the Scandinavian countries, Inessa Armand in Switzerland and France, and Nadezhda Krupskaya in Switzerland.

During the world war most leagues of the Young Socialist International took an internationalist stand. The Berne Conference of the Socialist Unions of Youth, held in the spring of 1915 and attended by Inessa Armand and Yegorov, who were delegated by Lenin to represent the Bolshevik Party, stressed that a decisive struggle had to be waged against the opportunists and Centrists in the working-class movement.

Following the Berne Conference the Bolsheviks exercised a growing influence on the International's youth leagues. The Young Socialist International's stand on the most important political and tactical questions became more and more clear-cut, and it began to defend the world solidarity of the workers and to hold up the social-patriots' betrayal to shame. It was one of the first to join the Zimmerwald union<sup>1</sup>; also, it put its official publication, the *Jugend Internationale* (Young International) magazine, at the disposal of the Zimmerwald Left group. Lenin, Karl Liebknecht, Alexandra Kollontai and other prominent leaders of the world working-class movement contributed to the magazine.

Recalling his talks with Lenin, Willi Münzenberg, leader of the Young Socialist International during the First World War, wrote that they helped him and other Swiss internationalists to break with the pacifist and Centrist groups and

<sup>1</sup> An international socialist conference was held in Zimmerwald in 1916 to further the unity of the Left Social-Democrats in the West European countries on the ideological basis of Marxism-Leninism.—Ed.



armed them with a revolutionary world outlook.

"Lenin explained to us the structure of Kautsky's falsified superficial 'Marxism' and his theoretical school of thought which was based entirely on historical development of economic conditions and barely recognised the importance of subjective factors in the struggle for socialism. Contrariwise, Lenin emphasised the role of the individual and the masses in the historical process, and brought to the foreground the Marxist theory that within the framework of any given economic conditions the people made their own history. This emphasis on the importance of the individual, group and party in the social struggle produced the strongest impression on us and encouraged us to devote all our energy to achieving the maximum results.

"The greatest contribution to the rapid revolutionary development of the Socialist Youth International after the Berne Conference was made by Lenin himself. Without the personal and comradely help which he gave us most tactfully, the International Youth Bureau in Zurich would have been of little use to the youth movement during 1914-18."<sup>1</sup>

The First World War and the collapse of the Second International prepared the youth organisations to play an important role in the struggle for the establishment of new workers' parties, parties of a revolutionary type, free from opportunism and social-chauvinism. To achieve this, the young people had to carry out extensive organisational and political work. Stressing the importance of the tasks facing socialist youth organisa-

tions, Lenin wrote: "With this state of affairs in Europe, there falls on the League of Socialist Youth Organisations the tremendous, grateful but difficult task of fighting for revolutionary internationalism, for true socialism and against the prevailing opportunism which has deserted to the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie."<sup>1</sup>

Many articles in the *Jugend Internationale* magazine were designed to instil a deep sense of internationalism in the young people in the West European countries. The magazine won high prestige and became the leading centre of the socialist youth organisations by always keeping its readers in touch with the workers' revolutionary activities in various countries, and by describing the youth leagues' activities and publishing material which was of interest to young people as a whole. It was from this magazine that young people took up Lenin's appeal to establish the Third, Communist International.

The Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia gave a powerful impetus to the development of the world working-class movement. Youth organisations warmly welcomed the proletarian revolution in Russia and the establishment of Soviet power there.

Young people took an active part in the workers' revolutionary activities in the West European countries and showed considerable courage and heroism in the workers' struggle.

Youth organisations actively helped to set up young Communist parties. In Spain, Belgium and Sweden they became the framework of the Communist parties, which adhered to the platform of the Communist International.

<sup>1</sup> *They Knew Lenin. Reminiscences of Foreign Contemporaries*, Moscow, p. 82.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 163.



The history of the youth movement took a sharp turn when the Third, Communist International was set up. Lenin took an active part in its establishment after the collapse of the Second International.

The question of setting up an international union of young Communists was raised immediately after the First Congress of the new Communist International. The Executive Committee of the Communist International made a passionate appeal to young workers in all countries to set up the Youth International. This was immediately supported by progressive organisations. The Young Communist International held its Constituent Congress in Berlin in November 1919, which was attended by representatives of 14 young workers' unions with a total membership of 229,000.

The congress, which formulated the Young Communist International's political Programme and Rules and declared its adherence to the platform of the Communist International, gave a strong impetus to the consolidation of existing youth organisations and to the establishment of new ones in Asia and America.

Although Lenin was extremely busy at the time, he devoted much attention to the international youth movement; he talked to the leaders of the Young Communist International and helped them in their practical work. He always tried to ensure that the rising generation was educated in accordance with the ideas of proletarian internationalism, the need for the youth movement's political guidance, the unity of young people round Communist parties and unity of action of Communist parties and communist youth organisations.

The Third Congress of the Young Communist International, held in Moscow in December 1922,

was attended by representatives of 38 youth organisations from various countries. It discussed the most important tasks facing the young workers' movement: the fight against both fascism and the threat of war, and the need to turn the young communist leagues into mass organisations which would be a militant reserve and active helpmate for Communist parties.

Lenin devoted a great deal of care and attention to the problems facing young people, and his active participation in the elaboration of a correct political line for the young communist movement determined the Young Communist International's place in the vanguard of those fighting against capitalism.

The Young Communist International, which helped to disseminate Marxist-Leninist ideas among young workers in many countries, was the Third International's reliable helpmate and reserve for almost 25 years. The young communist leagues had always given loyal assistance to the Communist parties. By uniting the young communist leagues against fascism and war and by guiding them in the working-class struggle, the Young Communist International made an important contribution to the world working-class movement and the struggle for the bright future of mankind—communism.

The Young Communist International laid the foundations for the young revolutionaries' mass movement, helped to set up strong national youth organisations and trained the personnel of the young communist movement. It prepared thousands of fine young people to fight for the cause of the working class, and produced such prominent leaders of the international workers' and communist movement as Raymond Guyot, John



Gollan, Luigi Longo, François Billoux, Georges Cogniot and Otto Winzer.

Over 50 years have passed since the establishment of the Young Communist International. The young communist leagues, closely linked with the Communist parties and continuing the best traditions of the Young Communist International, are now playing a very important part in the youth movement, which has millions of members united by the World Federation of Democratic Youth. These leagues are the most consistent and unrelenting defenders of the young workers' interests today.



Lenin

**Chapter I**  
**YOUTH MOVEMENT.**  
**EMERGENCE AND MAIN STAGES**  
**OF DEVELOPMENT**

**1. Youth Movement Before the First World War**

The marked increase of young people in the ranks of the working class with socialist parties in the advanced capitalist countries led to the establishment of youth organisations.

The first separate young workers' organisations were set up at the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup> By this time youth organisations had already become a component part of the socialist movement.

The first youth organisation, the Young Guards, was set up in 1886 in the Belgian town of Ghent. A little later youth organisations were set up in Switzerland (1900), Italy (1901), Norway (1902), Austria (1904), Hungary (1905), Denmark (1905), Germany (1906), Spain (1906) and Finland (1906).

At first these youth organisations pursued purely economic aims and hardly took any part in the workers' political struggle.

However as the young people became familiar with Marxist ideas they began to believe in the ultimate victory of the cause of the working class. The process of drawing young people into the revolutionary struggle was checked by the Right-wing leaders of the socialist and Social-Democratic parties and the leaders of the reformist trade unions. These leaders, backed by the "labour

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<sup>1</sup> The history of bourgeois and religious youth organisations will not be dealt with here.



aristocracy", set themselves the aim of creating more or less tolerable living and working conditions within the framework of the capitalist system, instead of putting an end to the capitalist mode of production. This was the main purpose behind the practical activities of the social-reformists and the numerous "theoretical" investigations of the ideologists of opportunism.

The leaders of most Social-Democratic parties and reformist trade unions recognised a grave danger in the young workers, who were largely unskilled, untrained and disinclined to conciliatory tactics. Among the other measures, limits were imposed in many countries on the admission of young workers into the socialist parties and trade unions, and non-political youth organisations were set up, which were confined to "cultural" activities. A good example of this is the Workers' Party of Belgium, set up in 1885.<sup>1</sup> Its programme mainly called for universal suffrage, free compulsory secular education, the separation of the Church from the state, legal recognition of the trade unions, insurance for all citizens, introduction of progressive income tax, an eight-hour working day, and prohibition of employment of children under 14. It did not include the questions of the revolutionary transformation of Belgium and the struggle for the workers' political power.

The programme included a section entitled "Youth", from which it is evident that the Workers' Party of Belgium did not aim at establishing a revolutionary organisation of young workers and turning the young workers into the party's mili-

<sup>1</sup> The Workers' Party of Belgium is singled out here because its charter deals with the party-youth relationship in the greatest detail and because Belgium was the birthplace of the first proletarian youth organisation.

tant reserve. This section also made no mention of ensuring unity of action between all the contingents of the working class. Clause 55 read as follows: "Juveniles and young people of every district may unite into separate groups called the Young Socialist Guards."

The "socialist" organisation consisted of young people of various classes living in the given district; this was corroborated also by Clause 61, which made it incumbent on the members of the youth organisation to join the trade union from the age of 18 if they were working; the organisation was therefore not made up of the young workers alone. Instead of uniting the young workers with the other contingents of the working class, the Workers' Party of Belgium disunited the workers. As regards the aim of the youth organisation, Clause 59 of the party programme said: "The young socialist organisations' task is to educate all its members physically, intellectually and morally by means appropriate to their age and psychology."

Thus the Workers' Party of Belgium did not aim at giving young people a truly revolutionary world outlook or teaching them to hate and despise the bourgeoisie. The youth organisations were confined to athletic, cultural and educational activities. Such youth organisations were quite acceptable to the bourgeoisie, who did their best to distract young people away from politics and active participation in the country's socio-political life. The only political task with which the party entrusted the youth movement was the spreading of anti-militarist propaganda. This, however, was not contrary to the general nature of the youth organisations' work or to the aims of the leaders of the Workers' Party and the bourgeois state.



Like Switzerland, Sweden and Norway at the time, Belgium adopted a neutral and non-aligned position in the Great Powers' military alliances.

Clause 61 of the party programme said that the members of the Young Guards could join the local party organisation upon reaching the age of 21. Those below this age were virtually barred from participation in the country's political life.

The youth organisation's activity was subject to party control. Before the annual national congress of the Young Socialist Guards could be held, permission had to be obtained from the General Council of the Workers' Party.

Unlike several other parties of the Second International, the Workers' Party of Belgium supported the establishment of special youth organisations, but this was not because it was of a particular revolutionary nature. On the contrary, this fact showed that its leaders had taken skilful and timely account of the political situation and used all possible means to maintain their influence over the young workers.

Starting from the mid-19th century the political struggle in Belgium centred for several decades round the question of education and the separation of the school from the Church. It was fiercely waged by the two main bourgeois political parties, the liberals and catholics, and it distracted the working people from the genuinely revolutionary struggle for their vital interests. The fact that public attention was focussed on the question of education naturally roused young people and made them more active. Moreover, the 1880s was a period when the Belgian working class was being roused and beginning to take part in a mass struggle for its political and economic rights. The banning of youth organisations would have in-

flamed young people even more. In their efforts to maintain their influence over young people and direct their zeal into the required channels, the leaders of the Workers' Party considered it best to set up non-class youth organisations.

In several other European countries socialist party leaders opposed the establishment of separate youth organisations. One such country was Germany, where young workers' organisations were first set up in 1906. The German Social-Democratic leaders strongly opposed the establishment of separate socialist youth organisations.

The German workers were remarkably closely united and well organised. This frightened the Right-wing party leaders who were doing their utmost to direct the German working class along reformist lines. It explains why they opposed the establishment of young workers' organisations, fearing that they would develop along revolutionary lines. They had good grounds for fearing this, because in Germany the young workers constituted a large part of the working class. In 1907 there were 13,469,000 wage workers, of which 4,326,000 (33 per cent) were in the 14 to 18 age group.

Both examples quoted above demonstrate that the opportunists in Belgium and Germany opposed the drawing of young workers into the revolutionary, class struggle. This was also true of the Right-wing leadership of the Second International.

The Left-wing representatives of the Second International took a different stand. They supported young people's active participation in political life and the workers' revolutionary struggle. The Right-wing leaders of the international socialist movement, however, began to exercise



growing influence, and this strongly affected the youth movement's organisation and general trend.

In an attempt to defend their interests by themselves, the young people in several European countries began a struggle of their own, but in most cases they were caught in the meshes of social-reformism.

The youth movement had a different fate in Russia. There, despite brutal police tyranny, the workers' militant revolutionary party was set up on the eve of the first revolution in 1905. Its aim was to put an end to capitalism and build a socialist society. Setting up such a party under the tsarist regime was a very difficult task demanding the concentration of material resources and human reserves of the working class.

Under these conditions it would have been inexpedient to raise the question of setting up a separate young workers' organisation. Lack of experience in the political struggle and underground work would have inevitably led to the collapse of any such organisation. Analysing the experience gained from the first Russian revolution in 1905, Lenin wrote: "...young workers need the experience of veteran *fighters* against oppression and exploitation, of those who have organised many strikes, have taken part in a number of revolutions, who are wise in revolutionary traditions, and have broad political outlook."<sup>1</sup>

The working youth of Russia, who were very revolutionary-minded, sought to take an extremely active part in the Russian workers' struggle in the impending revolution. The tsarist authorities

therefore did their best to isolate young workers from the other workers.

A powerful upsurge of revolutionary enthusiasm among the working people and the threat of revolution forced the tsarist government to take measures, which the authorities passed off as reforms and concessions made by the employers to the workers, but which were in fact only a new means of duping the workers. One such measure was the law on factory monitors, by which, under certain conditions, the workers were given the right of representation in their relations with their employers, the right of some rudimentary organisation. Lenin explained the true significance of this law to the workers, and drew their attention to the fact that the factory monitors had to be at least 25 years of age. It is worth noting that the original draft law proposed a minimum age of 21, but after giving some thought to the matter, the authorities decided that it would be more prudent to raise it to 25, which would prevent many young revolutionary-minded workers from taking part in elections. This alone did not satisfy them, however. The law also provided that at individual enterprises the factory management and the police could, if they so desired, stipulate a higher age qualification and a longer period of service at the enterprise. Moreover, the elections of factory monitors were carried out according to categories, drawn up by the factory owners and the police in such a way as to prevent the workers from uniting and consolidating their solidarity, and sow discord among workers not only of different professions, but also of different nationalities, age, sex, skills, earnings and so on.

Lenin repeatedly stressed that "...unity, organisation and solidarity are the only source of

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 412.



strength to the downtrodden, oppressed wage-slaves of our civilisation, ground down as they are by toil."<sup>1</sup>

For the working-class movement to be successful, there has to be cohesion and unity of action between all its contingents. This was what the workers' party of Bolsheviks taught ever since it was established.

The Party adopted its Programme and Rules at its second congress, held in 1903. Among the measures aimed at giving the workers labour protection, the "minimum programme" raised the following demand to "protect the working class from physical and moral degeneration": "Prohibition of the employment of children of school age (up to 16) and limitation of the working day for adolescents (from 16 to 18) to six hours." The programme envisaged "free compulsory general and professional education for all children, male and female, up to the age of 16, and the provision of poor children with food, clothing and educational material at the expense of the state".

The congress also discussed the attitude to young students. Russia was fast approaching the democratic revolution, in which broad sections of the population were to take part. The congress therefore welcomed the upsurge of revolutionary initiative among young students, and called on all "Party organisations to help these young people in every way possible in their attempts to become organised".

The resolution adopted by the congress mentioned two main tasks for the young student groups: 1) the cultivation of an integrated and consistent socialist world outlook, and 2) the estab-

lishment of ties with Social-Democratic organisations and the use of their instructions to avoid making serious errors in the preliminary stages.

At the congress Lenin made a speech on this question, in which he exposed the aim of the bourgeois parties to divert the young student movement from the correct lines; he stressed that the young people must understand the various political trends properly before they could choose the correct political line. The Bolsheviks always attached great importance to winning young people over to their side. It is most significant that the clause on Party membership in the Rules set no age limit on admission into the Party. Moreover, Lenin repeatedly drew the attention of Party workers to the need to swell the Party ranks with young people, and urged them to show more confidence in entrusting young people with Party work. Lenin wrote to S. I. Gusev: "A professional revolutionary must build up dozens of new connections in each locality, put all the work into their hands while he is with them, teach them and bring them up to the mark not by lecturing them but by work. Then he should go to another place and after a month or two return to check up on the young people who have replaced him. I assure you that there is a sort of idiotic, philistine, Oblov-mov-like fear of the youth among us. I implore you: fight this fear with all your might."<sup>1</sup>

The impending revolution brought this question to the fore. The young people, with their inherent resolve, courage and selflessness, were to make up the Party's militant force in the coming battle.

Lenin showed the Party workers how important it was for a revolutionary to have the ability

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 512.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 34, pp. 296-97.



to find forms and methods of work which corresponded to the new conditions and tasks. He himself was a brilliant exponent of this art.

Seeing that revolutionary enthusiasm was rapidly growing among the masses, Lenin repeatedly stressed that there was no need to be apprehensive about young people's inexperience. He said that participation in revolutionary battles was the best school for young revolutionaries, and that in the course of the class struggle the young workers would see for themselves that the Bolshevik Party's theory and programme were correct.

It must be noted that in the Russian Social-Democratic Party the opportunists, like their Western counterparts, were strongly opposed to young people taking part in Party activities. In a pamphlet, the Menshevik Party leader Y. Larin openly expressed the hope that the party would have less young people and more family and other men weary of struggle.

Lenin expressed his gratitude to Y. Larin for being so frank, and strongly attacked the Mensheviks for their opportunistic policy. He gibed: "What you want is not a vanguard-party but a *rearguard-party*, so that it will be rather more sluggish."<sup>1</sup>

The heroism displayed by young people in Russia was a shining example for the youth of the world, inspiring them with confidence in their own strength. The young Russian workers who took a very active part in the first Russian revolution (1905-1907) had a strong influence on the young German workers. This is evident from the telegram which the meeting of the Union of the Young Workers of Germany in Mannheim sent to

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 355.

Russian workers on October 30, 1906. It said in part: "We... are especially proud that our class consciousness has been roused and that we have set up our organisation during an historic epoch, the epoch of the Russian revolution. We send our ardent greetings to the Russian freedom fighters, represented by many young people. We admire the forceful energy and inexhaustible self-sacrifice of the working class in its struggle for the destruction of blood-stained tsarism."<sup>1</sup>

During the Russian bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1905-1907, the German Social-Democrats began to spread anti-war propaganda widely among the young workers. The growing influence of the Social-Democrats on young people caused marked anxiety among the ruling circles. This is evident in a report from the German War Minister von Einem to Chancellor Bülow: "I see the ever-growing number of socialist-minded elements among the recruits and reserves, and the anti-militarist agitation, as a grave threat and danger to the army in its main tasks in both peace and war, which, in my opinion, must be fought most vigorously in all circumstances."<sup>2</sup>

The government had every reason to be alarmed, for anti-militarist propaganda was yielding fruit. The ranks of the young workers' leagues swelled markedly and new active organisations were set up.

The bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia greatly furthered the establishment of coherent militant unions in several other countries as well.

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Geschichte der Arbeiterjugend Bewegung in Deutschland. Eine Auswahl von Materialien und Dokumenten aus den Jahren 1904-1946*, Berlin, 1956, S. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Auswirkungen der ersten russischen Revolution von 1905-1907 auf Deutschland*, Berlin, 1956, Bd. I, S. 154.



The events in Russia stimulated young people to strive for unity of action on a world scale. Drawing on the experience gained by the socialist parties that were united in an international organisation, youth organisations reached the conclusion that a Youth International must be set up. The first attempt to set up an international youth organisation during the Congress of the International in Paris in 1900 had failed.

Another attempt to set up an international organisation was made immediately after the Second International held its congress in Stuttgart in 1907. The young people succeeded in holding a world conference largely owing to the discussion of militarism at the Congress of the Second International. At the proposal of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg the following demand was entered into August Bebel's resolution: "Help the young workers to be educated in the spirit of the fraternity of nations and socialism and to be imbued with class consciousness." The young people were quick to take up these internationalist ideas, as can be seen from the First International Youth Conference, held from August 24 to 26, 1907. The conference was attended by delegates from Germany, Belgium, Bohemia, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Australia. In all, there were 20 delegates representing 60,000 members of socialist youth leagues.

Karl Liebknecht, the initiator of the conference, was elected its chairman. He was deeply respected by young people all over the world because he attacked the reformists in the Social-Democratic parties and drew youth into the socialist movement's activities. He strongly criticised the leaders of the Second International, who approached the

question of setting up an international youth organisation with great caution. A confirmed anti-militarist, Karl Liebknecht recognised the importance of carrying on work among the young people. He clearly formulated the role he had assigned to them by saying: "He who has the youth has the Army."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is not surprising that the struggle against militarism was the most important issue at the Stuttgart Conference. In his report on anti-militarism, Karl Liebknecht dealt at great length with the history of this question, describing the features of militarism in the epoch of the final stage of capitalism, and emphasising the important part militarism plays as the "bourgeoisie's main instrument of class domination and political subjugation of the working class"<sup>2</sup>.

The struggle in most countries against militarism was to lead to the political enlightenment of broad sections of the working people and to the unity of the Social-Democratic parties. Youth organisations began to play an important part in this. The struggle against militarism soon became of vital importance to the young workers, who were about to be called up for active service. Karl Liebknecht said: "The young workers must be systematically permeated with class consciousness and hatred of militarism. Youthful enthusiasm will make the young workers' hearts respond enthusiastically to such agitation. The young workers belong to Social-Democracy, to Social-Demo-

<sup>1</sup> Karl Liebknecht, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1958, Bd. I, S. 17.

<sup>2</sup> At Lenin's and Rosa Luxemburg's proposal this wording was incorporated into the resolution on militarism adopted by the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International.



cratic anti-militarism. If everyone does his duty, they shall and must be won."<sup>1</sup>

The conference delegates approved Karl Liebknecht's report. The resolution on militarism, proposed by Karl Liebknecht and adopted at the conference, said in part: "The conference draws particular attention to the danger of militarism in the internal class struggle and holds that it is the duty of the international youth movement to fight against militarism, as stated in the resolution of the congress (Stuttgart Congress of the Second International—*author*)." This was a step towards uniting the young forces against militarism.

The question of educational work in youth organisations was the second item on the conference agenda. Its discussion showed the influence exercised by the Social-Democratic parties' reformist leaders, who were trying to confine all the youth organisations' activities to educational work. The resolution adopted by the conference stressed that whereas the economic and political struggle was the main task of the adult workers' party and trade-union organisations, the main task of the

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Liebknecht, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, S. 456. Somewhat later Karl Liebknecht developed the ideas contained in the report in a special theoretical work on militarism, which was published in late 1907 as a separate book entitled *Militarismus und Antimilitarismus (Militarism and Anti-Militarism)*. A German court tried and sentenced Karl Liebknecht to one-and-a-half year's imprisonment in a fortress for this book and his speech at the world youth conference.

In the theses on the history of the German working-class movement, the 16th Plenary Meeting of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, held in June 1962, stressed the great theoretical importance of this work, which gave a profound analysis of the anti-popular nature of Prussian militarism (see *Einheit*, Sonderheft, August 1962, S. 97-98).

youth organisations was the struggle for education. This was unsatisfactory, however, for it distracted the young workers from the urgent tasks facing the working class.

The young workers' economic struggle was the third item on the agenda. The resolution adopted by the conference said that advanced machinery had considerably increased the number of adolescents in industry, that the capitalists preferred to employ young workers because they could pay them much less than adults, and that there was mounting exploitation of young people. The conference therefore passed a resolution on the need to step up the struggle to regulate adolescents' labour and ensure observance of the labour protection laws for young workers.

A programme of economic demands, several of which are just as important for the youth struggle in the capitalist countries today, was drawn up for the first time in the history of the youth movement. The relevant resolution adopted by the conference stressed that it was necessary to: 1) ban the employment of young people under 16 and at the same time extend the period of compulsory schooling to this age; 2) limit the working day to a maximum of six hours for all workers, including female workers under 18; 3) ban night shifts for workers under 18.

Despite the obstruction by Right-wing forces, the conference specially adopted theses stressing that young people feel the need to be trained for the class struggle and that socialist parties must help them in this respect. The most important result of the conference was its decision to set up an international union of socialist youth organisations, which soon came to be known as the Young Socialist International. The conference elected a

Bureau of the Youth International, chaired by Karl Liebknecht, to guide the new union in its work.

The international conference and the establishment of the Youth International were of great importance to the youth movement's further development. The young people set up their own organisations in almost all the West European countries and began to consolidate their international ties. The task of establishing their first international organisation and working out a programme of concerted action was accomplished under very difficult conditions. Despite all its shortcomings, the conference contributed greatly to the development of a sense of internationalism among the young people.

After the defeat of the Russian revolution in 1905-1907 reformism grew in the socialist parties. It was only organisational independence which enabled youth organisations to fight successfully for some time against the socialist parties' reformist influence and the bourgeois governments' mounting persecution.

Although they had to contend with difficult conditions, the representatives of the Left wing of the Second International continued to fight for youth participation in practical revolutionary activities. They regarded the young people as the force which would continue their cause after them.

In his speech at the Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party on September 13, 1909, Karl Liebknecht said: "We believe it necessary at the present time to draw the attention of our comrades in the party with ever greater vigour to the exceptional importance of the youth movement for the future of our party."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Karl Liebknecht, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1960, Bd. II, S. 331.



Karl Liebknecht



As the likelihood of a world war increased and the ruling circles intensified their attempts to whip up chauvinism in young people, it became necessary to intensify work among young people. The militarists had successfully exploited young people's desire for greater activity and set up numerous athletic and paramilitary organisations. Charitable societies allocated large sums of money for encouraging in young people a spirit of resigned obedience to the authorities. Moreover, many laws were passed creating extremely difficult conditions for the young workers' revolutionary organisations. This was particularly true of Germany. In 1908 a law was passed banning those under 18 from taking part in political activities, which virtually outlawed youth organisations. Youth organisations set up committees consisting largely of the most reactionary representatives of the Social-Democratic Party and reformist trade unions.

Pressured by the reformist leaders, the German trade unions held a congress in Hamburg in 1908, at which they adopted a resolution condemning independent youth leagues. The same year the German Social-Democratic Party adopted a similar resolution at a congress held in Nuremberg. The reformists in the German Social-Democratic Party and trade unions managed to have youth organisations disbanded despite their protests.

The reformists in the Social-Democratic Party decided to set up commissions under local party organisations to carry on educational work among young people and to replace the existing separate youth organisations in Germany. Most of these commissions were controlled by opportunists who tried to keep the young people away from politics and to confine their activities to excursions and sport.

Despite persecution a handful of German youth organisations continued to exist under the guidance of the Left Social-Democrats in Berlin, Dresden, Jena, Leipzig, Stuttgart and Weimar, but their importance was considerably undermined by the reformist youth organisations and the Central Board of Young German Workers, headed for a long time by Fritz Ebert, a traitor to the German working class who later became president of the Weimar Republic.

To subordinate youth organisations even further, the Social-Democratic Party of Germany set up the *Junge Deutschland* League in 1911 as the socialist youth's leading body. Its founders' aim was to train young social-chauvinists to be loyal to the Kaiser government and alien to the class struggle.

The reformists in both the trade unions and the Social-Democratic Party succeeded in making the new youth organisations indifferent to politics by reducing all their activities to sports and games. Thus, by the time the world war broke out, the members of these youth organisations were full-fledged social-patriots.

Things were much the same in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Finland, Holland and Rumania.

However the growth of young workers' organisations could not be halted. In his speech at the Social-Democratic Party Congress in Jena in 1911, Karl Liebknecht stressed that the "feverish defensive actions by the government and ruling classes" to win the support of young people show the "power of the young workers' movement and the fear which it strikes into the ruling classes".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Karl Liebknecht, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, Bd. IV, S. 461.

At the time of the first youth conference in Stuttgart in 1907, youth organisations had 60,000 members, but by 1914 youth organisations, which totalled 15, had a membership of 170,000. This shows clearly that youth organisations continued to grow in the period preceding the outbreak of the war.

These difficult conditions made it essential for revolutionary youth organisations to have permanent ties and unity of action, and for this they had to hold a world conference. It should be noted that several youth organisations in Italy, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and some other countries managed to maintain their independence and did not fall under the influence of social-patriotism and chauvinism.

The socialist youth organisations held their second world conference in Copenhagen in September 1910 at the time when the Second International was holding its congress. The conference was attended by 32 delegates from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Holland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. German youth were not represented at the conference since the Central Board of Young German Workers did not join the international league. The conference was attended by several guests from other countries, including Karl Liebknecht from Germany, who made a report on militarism.

The conference mainly discussed the socialist youth organisations' relation to the socialist parties and trade unions, which were increasingly adopting a position of reformism and flagrant betrayal of working-class interests.

The opportunists did their best to subordinate the young revolutionary leagues to the reformist parties and trade unions, and were largely suc-



cessful in this. The conference adopted a resolution that the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations should join the Second International.<sup>1</sup>

Progressive youth and the best representatives of the Second International opposed the official leadership of the Second International. Despite the actions of the reformist parties and trade unions, all the prewar activities of the Youth International's independent organisations were based on revolutionary aspirations. In his speech at the party congress in September 1911, Karl Liebknecht expressed his confidence in the young people's revolutionary future, saying: "The young workers will emerge victorious over all their enemies and produce contingents which, with time, will continue the struggle which the adults are waging now."<sup>2</sup>

In the socialist working-class movement the young workers' organisations became the main centres of radical opposition to the growing revisionism and opportunism, which was being spread mainly by party and trade union officials.

As the likelihood of war increased, it became essential to decide practical questions concerning young people's tactics. A conference was held in Basle on November 25, 1912, on the initiative of several youth organisations, the Italian one in particular. It was attended by 24 representatives from 19 countries and by many guests from

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<sup>1</sup> Later many differences arose when the reformists tried to disband the Youth International on the basis of this resolution.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Liebknecht, *Ausgewählte Reden, Briefe und Aufsätze*, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1952, S. 185.

various countries. These guests were mainly delegates to the congress of the Second International, which had just ended, and included Karl Liebknecht, founder of the Youth International.

The conference had one item on the agenda: the tasks facing the Youth International. The resolution adopted by the conference emphasised the growing likelihood of a world war and the unflinching resolve of the young people, the workers' young guards, to fight against war and prevent youth from being slaughtered in the interests of a handful of capitalists.

Despite its inconsistency and vacillation in carrying out its programme, the Youth International took a firm anti-militarist stand and resolutely opposed reformism in the socialist and workers' parties. Chicherin, who took part in the French youth movement, wrote: "By the outbreak of the war the important historical role of youth organisations in the formation of a new revolutionary socialist working-class movement had become quite clear. At the turn of the century Karl Liebknecht was able to write in his book on anti-militarism that the socialist youth organisations were the only means of fighting against militarism. The role of these organisations increased immeasurably by the outbreak of the war. They were at the very centre of the struggle of the new revolutionary elements in the international working-class movement against all that was bigoted and reactionary in the working class and its organisations; they were in the very centre of the formation of the new, revolutionary tactics and the new concept of the class struggle."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. Chicherin, *From the History of the Youth International* (Russ. ed.), Moscow-Leningrad, 1925, p. 73.



## 2. International Youth Movement During the First World War

The First World War, which broke out in 1914, brought great misery to the working class in all countries. The bourgeois governments had been openly preparing for it for several years, and when it broke out the working class was not caught unawares. All the congresses of the Second International, beginning with the one held in Stuttgart, had emphasised the inevitability of another war and called for organised resistance to it. The manifesto of the Basle Congress of the Second International (the last congress to be held before war broke out) also emphasised that the imperialist states were preparing for war, predicting the belligerent parties and stating their main aims. Nevertheless when the war broke out the betrayal by most leaders of the Second International's socialist parties, and their open support of bourgeois governments, naturally threw the ranks of the working class into disarray. Lenin wrote: "The opportunists have wrecked the decisions of the Stuttgart, Copenhagen and Basle congresses, which made it binding on socialists of all countries to combat chauvinism in all and any conditions, made it binding on socialists to reply to any war begun by the bourgeoisie and governments, with intensified propaganda of civil war and social revolution."<sup>1</sup>

At the talks between the French and German socialist parties in early August 1914 it emerged that the French party's parliamentary group would vote for war credits, and the German so-

cialists decided "not to fall behind" their French colleagues in the Second International. In his speech at the Reichstag on August 4, 1914, party chairman Hugo Haase said that "the party would not desert the homeland in its hour of need", that is, it would also vote for war credits. The very same day the French socialists voted for the approval of war bills. In mid-August 1914 the French socialist leaders Jules Guesde and Marcel Sembat became members of the French government; their example was followed somewhat later by Albert Thomas. Emile Vandervelde, leader of the Second International, became a member of the Belgian government as soon as the war broke out. In Germany the socialists gave full support to the government despite the fact that they were barred from government posts. In Britain the Labour Party abstained from voting for war credits at the outset of the war, but later sent James Ramsay MacDonald and others to represent it in parliament.

The war roused the workers, many of whom soon realised the full gravity of the betrayal by the leaders of the Second International. It brought great material hardship to the working class, aggravated class contradictions and weakened international ties between the socialist parties. The Left-wing socialists in all countries were confronted with the complete break-up of the Second International, which could not withstand the strain of the war. The Right-wing leadership of the Second International had succeeded in adapting itself to the peaceful capitalist mode of development, but when the imperialist powers unleashed the war, the workers at large became clearly aware of the leadership's inconsistency in the face of new developments.

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 31.



Lenin wrote: "The collapse of the Second International is the collapse of opportunism, which developed from the features of a new bygone (and so-called 'peaceful') period of history, and in recent years has come practically to dominate the International. The opportunists have long been preparing the ground for this collapse by denying the socialist revolution and substituting bourgeois reformism in its stead; by rejecting the class struggle with its inevitable conversion at certain moments into civil war, and by preaching class collaboration. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The betrayal by the leaders of the Social-Democratic parties and the Second International strongly undermined the international working-class movement for some time to come and severed international ties between the Social-Democratic parties and young workers' organisations.

In this extremely difficult situation, it was the Bolshevik Party which successfully worked out the only correct tactics for the struggle against the imperialist war. The manifesto of the CC RSDLP, written by Lenin at the very outbreak of the war and entitled "War and Russian Social-Democracy", clearly defined the workers' tasks under the new conditions. It said in part: "Seizure of territory and subjugation of other nations, the ruining of competing nations and the plunder of their wealth, distracting the attention of the working masses from the internal political crises in Russia, Germany, Britain and other countries, disuniting and nationalist stultification of the workers, and the extermination of their vanguard so as to weaken the revolutionary movement of

the proletariat—these comprise the sole actual content, importance and significance of the present war."<sup>1</sup>

The manifesto called for the turning of the imperialist war into a civil one, Russia's defeat in the reactionary war, and the establishment of a new, truly revolutionary Third International.

Youth organisations reacted to the outbreak of the war in different ways. In Germany, Austria and France, social-patriotism infected the youth organisations as well, which were under the control of the socialist parties, the traitors to the cause of the International. The International Bureau of the Young Socialist International in Vienna, which was not very active before the war, ceased its activities altogether when war broke out. However, most youth organisations remained loyal to working-class interests and the ideals of proletarian internationalism during these trying years. These organisations included the youth leagues in Switzerland and Italy, which were successfully spreading anti-militarist propaganda. As early as in the first few months of the war, Italian and subsequently Swiss youth organisations realised that the International Bureau was completely inactive and decided that it was essential to hold a meeting of their representatives.

At first only the representatives of youth organisations in the neutral countries were expected to attend the meeting, but later, when it was learned that youth organisations in other countries also wished to take part, a decision was passed to hold an international conference.

Youth organisations in Austria, Germany and

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 31-32.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.



France officially refused to take part in the conference, maintaining that young people should not discuss political matters, particularly since the adult workers had still not expressed their attitude towards the war. German youth representatives, however, came to the conference despite a ban imposed by the Central Board of the Youth Organisations of Germany. The conference was held in Berne from April 4 to 6, 1915, and was attended by delegates from 10 countries representing 33,000 young socialists. It was also attended by the Russian representatives, Inessa Armand and Yegorov, delegated by the CC RSDLP.

The conference adopted the following agenda:

1. Elections to the presidium and organisational questions.
2. Reports of youth organisations from individual countries.
3. The war and the tasks facing the Young Socialist International and other questions.

After delegates from various European countries had made their reports on the youth organisations' work, the conference turned to the main item on the agenda: "The war and the tasks facing the Young Socialist International." The lengthy discussion showed that the delegates were still divided on this question. The resolution, adopted by 13 votes to 3, stressed that the war was of an imperialist, aggressive nature, and that it was the "result of the imperialist policy pursued by the ruling classes in all the capitalist countries". In its resolution, the conference denounced the "civil peace" policy pursued by the social-chauvinists as betraying the workers' interests; it also condemned the betrayal by the leaders of the Social-Democratic parties and the Second International, who had not adhered to the anti-

war decisions adopted at the recent congresses of the International. The conference, however, did not go so far as to discuss the tasks facing the socialist movement. It confined itself to a repetition of old resolutions, and did not show the workers that there could be no hope for the cause of socialism unless a struggle was waged against the social-chauvinists.

Lenin attached great importance to the conference. The resolution, however, which was drafted on his instructions and proposed by the Bolshevik delegates, and which called for the turning of the imperialist war into a civil one, was rejected by the conference. This was only to be expected, as the conference delegates were still not ready for such a radical turn of events, largely because a great number of young people were under the influence of the Centrists, who concealed their bankrupt policies with such attractive phrases as "civil peace". Robert Grimm, an initiator of the conference, was one of them. He strongly opposed the granting of the vote to the Bolshevik deputies, knowing full well that they would advance revolutionary demands.

The conference made a grave error by adopting the proposal advanced by the delegates from the Scandinavian countries on disarmament, which was unrealistic and utopian in the situation prevailing at the time. The resolution said: "The international conference of socialist youth organisations demands that the youth leagues in all countries should take part in the working-class movement with the aim of having the demand for complete disarmament declared as a programme item." The Left-wing internationalists had to spend a great deal of time and effort helping young people reject this petty-bourgeois, pacifist slogan.



Among the resolutions passed by the conference, there was one making the anti-militarist International Youth Day (IYD) an annual public holiday. The conference also adopted the Rules of the International and the decision to publish the *Jugend Internationale* (Young International) magazine. By its decision, the re-established Bureau of the Youth International was transferred to Switzerland, and Willi Münzenberg, leader of the Social-Democratic youth organisation in Switzerland, became its secretary.

The importance of the Berne Conference lies above all in the fact that it was the first youth conference under extremely difficult circumstances to raise an outcry against the war and the betrayal by the Social-Democratic leaders. It re-established international ties between youth organisations and gave them a more revolutionary orientation. It also demonstrated clearly that workers' solidarity had grown during the years which were such a great trial for the young workers.

Acknowledging that the young revolutionaries had made certain definite achievements, Karl Liebknecht stressed that the "programme of the young workers' movement should once again be tried and tested in struggle. It is not only youthful inspiration of being always ready for action that makes the youth movement invulnerable, but also its clarity and resoluteness, strong faith, the urge for a united, international class struggle, the consciousness of class solidarity transcending all bounds, and the anti-militarist basis of its tactics".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Karl Liebknecht, *Ausgewählte Reden, Briefe und Aufsätze*, S. 321.

Lenin wrote that the conference was inspired by the fine intentions of its participants, but that it did not realise the danger of the re-establishment of the Second International by social-chauvinistic methods. He pointed out that "at best they were marking time"<sup>1</sup>.

The conference adopted vague decisions and its leaders did not envisage clearly the tasks facing the young people in the imperialist war. Nevertheless, the local youth organisations increased their anti-war activities considerably.<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of young people distributed illegal leaflets and pamphlets among the population, particularly among the soldiers. In the warring countries this work was illegal and the slightest error could lead to the death penalty. Many young people were executed for taking part in the underground struggle against the war.

Loyal to the youth organisations' traditional anti-militarist slogans, the young people at first took a purely pacifist stand and confined themselves to demands for ending the war. Like the best members of the Social-Democratic parties, they still did not realise the importance of encouraging revolutionary activity among the working people during the war. Lenin wrote: "At the present time, the propaganda of peace unaccompanied by a call for revolutionary mass action can only sow illusions, and demoralise the proletariat, for it makes the proletariat believe that the bourgeoisie is humane, and turns it into a

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that France did not respond to the Berne Conference until October 1915, when its appeal to the young revolutionaries of the world was published (see A. Ferrat, *Histoire du parti français*, Paris, 1931, p. 47).



plaything in the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent countries.”<sup>1</sup>

The war years instilled in young people an intense hatred of the existing system, showing them who was responsible for the war and how they should be fought. A leaflet being circulated at the time said: “The anger and grief for the millions of killed and maimed brothers must spark off a war against our own traitors and murderers of the people, and must throw a burning torch into the edifice of gross violence and tyranny. Brother workers, we have borne blood-stained fetters far too long among the general grief and suffering.”<sup>2</sup>

The Bolsheviks gave youth organisations much help in stepping up illegal revolutionary activities, particularly propaganda against the war. They set the young people an example by taking part in preparing anti-war leaflets and teaching them this work, which was of great importance to the revolutionaries. The distribution of illegal literature, however, was only a fraction of the work carried out by youth organisations during the war. Young people also took an active part in the workers’ protest strikes and demonstrations.

At this time the young workers’ organisations began to exercise growing influence, and more and more organisations joined the Youth International. Between April 1915 and February 1916 alone, youth organisations in Greece, Spain, the United States and Canada joined the Youth International, and were followed by the Youth League of Finland in mid-1916. By the end of

the war the young workers’ organisations of all countries except Holland and France had joined the Youth International, but in these two countries individual revolutionary organisations also regarded themselves as members of the international youth union.

With the outbreak of the war and the break-up of the Second International, the internationalists of all countries were faced with the task of setting up a new international revolutionary organisation. Preparations for its establishment were started in the early months of the war. To carry out this task, the internationalists had to be ideologically united. This very difficult and responsible work in the international working-class movement was taken on by the Bolsheviks. In August 1915 Nadezhda Krupskaya wrote: “The unity of the Left-wing leaders is now extremely important, and not so much organisational as ideological unity; the former will be the result of the latter.”

Before a new international union could be set up, every Social-Democratic party had to condemn individually the betrayal by the leaders of the Second International, so that concerted action could be taken for the next step.

In establishing the new international union, the Bolsheviks were always mindful of the Party reserve, the youth organisations, which were the most active working-class contingents free of reformism. Lenin took a keen interest in the state of the youth organisations and young people’s attitudes. The work of youth organisations could not be neglected, and they had to be given constant practical assistance. In carrying out the task entrusted to her by the Bolshevik Party, Alexandra Kollontai maintained close ties with the youth

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Ernst Drahn, Susanne Leonhard, *Unterirdische Literatur im revolutionärem Deutschland während des Weltkrieges*. Berlin, 1920, SS. 87-88.



organisations in the Scandinavian countries. She helped them to adopt the correct line and enjoyed great prestige among the young people. As early as mid-1915 she succeeded in obtaining a statement from the youth organisations in Norway officially condemning the treachery of the Second International's leaders.

In her report to Nadezhda Krupskaya in the summer of 1915, Alexandra Kollontai wrote that the youth organisations in Sweden had joined the Norwegian Socialist Youth Organisation in condemning the activities of the Second International, its leaders, their tactics, the voting for war credits and so forth, and had called this a "betrayal of socialism".

Swedish youth, who had strong influence on public opinion in their country, were among the most powerful contingents of the Youth International. They had three daily papers and 13 seats in parliament.

Lenin highly valued Alexandra Kollontai's work in the Scandinavian countries. In a letter to her he wrote: "We were very glad about the statement by the Norwegians and your efforts with the Swedes. It would be devilishly important to have a joint international statement by the *Left Marxists*!"<sup>1</sup>

This action was not long in coming. On the initiative of socialists in several countries, the representatives of the Social-Democratic parties favouring the unity of the internationalist elements in the working-class movement held their first international conference in Zimmerwald from September 5 to 8, 1915. The conference denounced the betrayal by the leaders of the Second In-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 200.

ternational, condemned the imperialist war and demanded that it be ended. Lenin and the Bolsheviks who took part in the conference, set up a revolutionary Marxist group which was subsequently called the Zimmerwald Left. This group, headed by Lenin, proposed a resolution demanding a complete break with the social-chauvinists. The resolution was not adopted, but some of its demands were written into the conference's manifesto. In assessing the document, Lenin wrote: "In practice, the manifesto signifies a step towards an ideological and practical break with opportunism and social-chauvinism. At the same time, the manifesto... contains inconsistencies, and does not say everything that should be said."<sup>1</sup>

This conference was of great importance. It accelerated the formation of a revolutionary Left wing in the international working-class movement and subsequently became the basis for the establishment of the Third International. Lenin wrote: "The unitedness of the former group is one of the most important facts and greatest achievements of the Conference."<sup>2</sup> The Zimmerwald Left group had a strong influence on the Youth International's activities at the time.

Youth organisations ardently supported the Zimmerwald Left group in its ideological battle against the Centrists and social-chauvinists, but before they accepted the Zimmerwald Left group's platform, a struggle took place among the young people themselves. It was only thanks to tireless work among youth explaining the trends in the world working-class movement and the tasks of the workers' organisations in the im-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 21, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.



perialist war that the process of revolutionising youth organisations was accelerated. The Bolsheviks played a very big part in this activity. Many prominent leaders of the Bolshevik Party living in emigration in West European countries during the First World War took part in the youth movement and helped to set up truly revolutionary organisations there by their practical work and advice. They included Chicherin in France, Alexandra Kollontai in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, Nadezhda Krupskaya in Switzerland, and Inessa Armand in France and Switzerland.

After the establishment of the Zimmerwald Left group, Lenin, who always attached great importance to youth participation in the revolutionary movement, repeatedly impressed on Party members that the young people had to be won over to their side and helped to understand the position adopted by the group.

This work yielded fruit. As early as January 1916 Lenin received news from Paris that the press there had reported that French youth had sided with the Zimmerwald Left group. This was soon followed by news that other youth organisations had announced their support of the Zimmerwald Left group.

In April 1916 Alexandra Kollontai wrote to Lenin, who asked her to keep him in touch with the stand taken by Scandinavian youth, saying that Norwegian youth organisations had also sided with the Zimmerwald Left. Somewhat later, in another letter to him, she wrote that the Norwegian and Swedish youth organisations "had no other Zimmerwald in view except the Zimmerwald Left".

The Bolsheviks' influence on the young workers also increased in other countries. In July 1916

Inessa Armand reported: "In Zurich I got in touch with the local youth organisation, which is taking a fairly Left-wing stand and which has members who avowedly support the Zimmerwald Left group."

The youth organisations in Switzerland, one of which Inessa Armand mentioned, set themselves the aim of "educating their members in the spirit of proletarian class consciousness".

In April 1916 the Second International Socialist Conference was held in Kienthal (Switzerland). Since the Zimmerwald Conference, the delimitation between the internationalists and social-chauvinists had become very pronounced, and the number of those supporting the Zimmerwald Left group's political platform had strongly increased. Although the political demands made by the members of the Zimmerwald Left group to turn the imperialist war into a civil one, to propagandise the defeat of their imperialist governments in the reactionary war and to establish a new Communist International, were not supported by the majority at the conference, they had a considerable impact on the revolutionary movement's development. The Zimmerwald Left group began to play a growing part in the international working-class movement, and this helped to distinguish it from the opportunists of various stripes and to show which were the truly revolutionary forces. The Kienthal Conference was another step forward towards the establishment of the Communist International. A representative of the Youth International was among the delegates at the conference.

The Zimmerwald Left group exerted a growing influence on the young people and strongly supported them in their actions against both the



imperialist war and the opportunists in the world working-class movement.

The *Jugend Internationale* magazine, which was issued in accordance with the decision of the Berne Conference, played an important part in this. It was published in German, Italian and Swedish, and had a circulation of 50,000. Karl Liebknecht, Clara Zetkin and Franz Mehring helped to publish it. It was illegally sent from Switzerland to Germany, where it was reprinted and circulated. Through the magazine Lenin, Karl Liebknecht, Alexandra Kollontai and other prominent leaders of the working-class movement explained the main aspects of the workers' revolutionary movement and the struggle against the imperialist war to the young people. Their articles strengthened the young people ideologically and helped them to rectify their mistaken attitude towards the social-chauvinists and Centrists.

The first issue included an article by Alexandra Kollontai on the new, Third International and the tasks facing the young workers in wartime. She stressed the need to set up the organisation, saying: "The Third Socialist International is not a utopia, it is not the 'unsubstantiated hope' of confirmed optimists. The factors who will set it up are present in our midst and have been engendered by the current crisis. Why, the workers' new International is Karl Liebknecht, it is the five deputies of the Russian State Duma languishing in Siberia, it is the steadily growing 'Left' of the German and Russian Social-Democratic parties, which has remained loyal to the principles of the class struggle and socialism."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. M. Kollontai, "Die neue Internationale und die Arbeiterjugend", *Jugend Internationale*. No. 1, Zürich, 1. September, 1915, S. 8.

The magazine actively began to carry out the decisions adopted by the Berne Conference, rousing the young people to vigorous action. It strongly urged young socialists to take revolutionary action, saying: "The time has come to act. . . . The soil is ready for a revolutionary uprising: now is the time to sow."<sup>1</sup>

The magazine reflected the successes, failures, achievements and errors made by the international youth movement. In response to the urgent questions worrying young people, the March (1916) issue of the magazine began a discussion on the topic "People's Army or Disarmament", and carried the editorial "Disarmament! Relentless Struggle Against Militarism and Its Breeder—Capitalism", which advanced the slogan "We Oppose All War!"<sup>2</sup>

This discussion helped the Youth International to reject the appeal for disarmament, which was not a correct one at a time when the imperialist war was being fought. Lenin carefully followed the discussion and gave invaluable assistance in this respect. In October 1916 he wrote the article "The 'Disarmament' Slogan", which was published in the magazine. In it, he summed up the results of the discussion, saying that the magazine had taken a wrong stand on the question of disarmament. "There is reason to believe," he wrote in his article "The Youth International," that this error arises entirely out of the laudable desire to emphasise the need to strive for the 'complete destruction of militarism' (which is perfectly correct); but the role of civil wars in the socialist revolution is forgotten." Lenin's articles helped

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Jugend Internationale*, No. 3, Zürich, 1. März, 1916, S. 7.



the Youth International to rectify its position on this important question.

In his article "The Youth International", which dealt with the magazine's work, Lenin pointed out several important mistakes made by the central youth organ. He particularly emphasised its wrong evaluation of the difference between the socialist and anarchist attitude to the state. While revealing the magazine's shortcomings and criticising its incorrect views, he advocated patience in dealing with young people's mistakes, and the need to correct them by persuasion and not by force. He stressed that the older generation was often incapable of dealing properly with young people, and that, under the new conditions, the young people were bound to have a different approach to socialism from their fathers. Stressing the young people's desire for the Youth International's organisational independence, Lenin wrote: "... we must decidedly *favour organisational independence* of the Youth League, *not only* because the opportunists fear such independence, but because of the very nature of the case. For unless they have complete independence, the youth *will be unable* either to train good socialists from their midst or prepare themselves to lead socialism forward."<sup>2</sup>

In December 1916 the sixth issue of the *Jugend Internationale* published the theses drawn up by the Secretariat of the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations. They dealt with the young workers' economic and political position, the influence of war on their position, and the tasks facing youth organisations. They also

assessed the situation created by the war, and emphasised the young workers' steadily worsening situation and the growth of their political activities. However, they did not define clearly the tasks facing the young people, and failed to analyse the world working-class movement and pinpoint the main trends in the socialist movement.

Lenin wrote with regard to the theses: "The 'declaration of principles of the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations', published in issue No. 6 as the 'Secretariat's draft', contains not a few inaccuracies, and does not contain the *main* thing: a clear comparison of the *three* fundamental trends (social-chauvinism, 'centre' and Left) now contending against each other in the socialist movement of all countries."<sup>1</sup>

The world war and the collapse of the Second International put youth organisations in the vanguard of the struggle to establish new workers' parties free of opportunism and social-chauvinism, i.e., revolutionary parties. To carry out this difficult task, the young people had to do an enormous amount of organisational and political work.

In stressing the gigantic tasks facing socialist youth organisations, Lenin wrote:

"Most of the official European Social-Democratic parties are advocating the foulest and vilest social-chauvinism and opportunism. ...

"With this state of affairs in Europe, there falls on the League of Socialist Youth Organisations the tremendous, grateful but difficult task of fighting for revolutionary internationalism, for true socialism and against the prevailing opportunism

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.



which has deserted to the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Jugend Internationale* carried many articles dealing with the task of developing a deep sense of internationalism in the West European youth organisations. It became the socialist youth organisations’ leading centre by keeping its readers in constant touch with the workers’ revolutionary activities in various countries and by publishing material that was of great interest to young people as a whole. It was from this magazine that the young people adopted the appeal to set up the Third International. Many of its pages echoed with hatred of those who had betrayed the cause of the working class. It is not surprising that all the eleven issues put out during the war were republished in 1926 in accordance with the decision adopted by the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International.

Although Lenin strongly criticised individual articles, he held the magazine in high esteem as a whole. He wrote: “The *Youth International* has published a number of good articles in defence of revolutionary internationalism, and the magazine as a whole is permeated with a fine spirit of intense hatred for the betrayers of socialism, the ‘defenders of the fatherland’ in the present war, and with an earnest desire to wipe out the corroding influence of chauvinism and opportunism in the international labour movement.”<sup>2</sup>

Lenin always impressed on the others the need to explain matters patiently to young people, to understand their requirements, to direct youth organisations along the right lines and warn them

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

against possible mistakes. He set a fine example of this in his personal dealings with youth organisations, which strongly influenced young people. By offering advice and criticising errors, he taught the young workers to be staunch fighters for the cause of the working class.

Writing about a report which Lenin was to make to the young people, Nadezhda Krupskaya noted in one of her letters that they were “part of us”, that they had many fine speakers, and that in general they had “the right spirit”. The young people liked Lenin’s reports, and they themselves willingly made speeches at such meetings.

Owing to wartime conditions, the Bureau of the Youth International did not manage to hold a meeting until early February 1916, ten months after the Berne Conference. It was followed several days later by a meeting between the leaders of the Youth International and the Zimmerwald Commission with a view to improving contacts. As a result, an agreement was reached on providing mutual ideological and moral support in individual actions. It was also resolved that in future a member of the Bureau of the Youth International would be invited to the meetings held by the enlarged commission. In accordance with this decision, the International Commission invited a representative of the Youth International to the Kienthal Conference.

Co-operation between the Bureau of the Youth International and the Zimmerwald Commission soon came to an end, however, when the Youth International left the Zimmerwald union owing to strong influence exerted by the Left group, which withdrew from the Zimmerwald Left to set up the Communist International.



The Bureau of the Youth International held a meeting in Stockholm from May 19 to 20, 1917, to discuss the international and political stand taken by the Youth International. A resolution was adopted which stressed that: "The events in Russia, which are of world historic importance, clearly show that the methods of the socialist class struggle which we are propagandising are correct. For this reason socialist youth greets the Russian revolutionaries with especial joy and celebrates their victory as the victory of revolutionary ideas. But just as the Russian revolution can gain a complete socialist victory only by a bitter struggle against the social-patriots, revolutionary tactics can triumph in all the other countries only by a bitter struggle against social-patriotism. It must therefore be the task of socialist youth to continue to serve as an invigorating factor in the common working-class movement and to fan constantly the flame of the revolutionary struggle. For this reason the International Union of Socialist Youth must strongly denounce all connections with the coming social-patriotic conference."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Bureau of the Youth International officially confirmed its break with the International Socialist Bureau in The Hague, which tried to revive the Second International. Moreover, this resolution was important because it showed that the socialist revolution in Russia could be victorious only if a decisive struggle was waged against the social-patriots, that is, the socialist-revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who supported

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<sup>1</sup> *Jugend Internationale*, No. 9, Zürich, 1. Sept. 1917, S. 19.

the bourgeois Provisional Government's policy of continuing to wage the imperialist war. The resolution shows clearly that Lenin's criticism of the Youth International's errors had helped the young people to take a correct stand.

The celebration of International Youth Day became very important during the war. The young people decided to celebrate it as a protest against the German and French ban on celebrating May Day, the working people's international solidarity day. Like all other protests by young people during the First World War, International Youth Day was accompanied by the slogan "Down with the Imperialist War!". It was first celebrated on October 3, 1915 in Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, Holland, the United States, Rumania and Portugal by about 120,000 young people. As the years passed, more and more young people began to celebrate it.

International Youth Day was celebrated on an especially wide scale in 1917 in Germany, where the young people's anti-war movement had reached enormous proportions. As early as August 1917 the Socialist Youth Movement put out an illegal leaflet calling for massive demonstrations. It said: "The socialist youth of all countries calls on their class comrades for powerful demonstrations. . . . International Youth Day must become a powerful onslaught by the revolutionary army of workers and young proletarians on the existing capitalist system." The leaflet ended with an appeal to the soldiers in the German army, saying: "It is to you, brothers in army greatcoats, that we address this appeal: 'If the people, driven to despair, finally take to revolutionary action, venturing upon the mortal battle and raising the



banner of revolution, fight along with us... Be soldiers of the revolution yourselves!"<sup>1</sup>

The actions by the young workers' organisations against the imperialist war took various forms.

In the belligerent countries, where anti-war activities were banned, young people courageously carried on underground work, thus contributing to the working-class struggle against the imperialist war waged by bourgeois governments.

A bitter struggle developed in the neutral countries as well, which also had influential bourgeois groups demanding the prohibition of anti-war propaganda, rallies and demonstrations. In both the belligerent and neutral countries the youth organisations achieved a great deal by their various activities.

In *Germany*, where even before the war, owing to social-traitors' efforts, youth organisations had been controlled by official leaders appointed by the Social-Democratic Party, the war roused young people to action. The young workers could not continue to flounder in the official organisations which were committed to social-chauvinism and flagrant betrayal of the working-class interests. The young people's official leaders did all they could to turn young workers into soldiers for the Kaiser's army. An appeal made by the Central Committee of Young German Workers to the young soldiers trained by youth organisations was full of hypocrisy about the "humanity" and "human dignity" which the soldiers should show on the battlefield. It said in part: "We strongly hope

that on the battlefield they will display the spirit of humanity and respect for human dignity instilled in them by the working youth movement."

The German government valued this "educational" work among young people very highly, as it did all the other Social-Democratic Party's chauvinist activities. The Minister for Religious Affairs, von Knelling, said: "The government has often had occasion to declare that, judging by their conduct during the war, Social-Democrats cannot be said to lack patriotic convictions. This also applies to the Social-Democratic youth organisation."<sup>1</sup>

The authorities took a very different attitude towards young people who did not wish to remain in the same ranks with those who had betrayed working-class interests, and stoutly opposed the military command's tyranny in the rear. When the authorities tried by force to use the young workers' earnings for purchasing war loans, they forced them to withdraw this decision by staging strikes. This struggle was particularly strong in Braunschweig in May 1916.

Many members began to withdraw from official youth organisations even before the war. During the war this withdrawal assumed massive proportions and led to the establishment of independent organisations in Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart and other towns. It was these oppositional organisations which upheld the Youth International's best traditions: the struggle against militarism in Germany.

The oppositional youth organisations had no common leadership or even permanent contact

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Drahn, Susanne Leonhard, *Unterirdische Literatur im revolutionären Deutschland während des Weltkrieges*, Berlin, 1920, S. 87-88.

<sup>1</sup> *Jugend Internationale*, No. 4, Zürich, 1. Juni, 1916, S. 13.



until the spring of 1916, and each organisation acted separately. It was the course of events which dictated the need for a union between them.

The young workers held an all-German conference in Jena from April 24 to 25, 1916. Its initiator, Karl Liebknecht, opened it with a report on the tasks facing the young people. A resolution was adopted drawing attention to the ever increasing militarist exploitation of the young workers, and stressing that this had roused the young people to vigorous political action and strengthened their role in the country's social life. The conference decisions reaffirmed the young German workers' loyalty to the concepts of internationalism and the Youth International. The conference sent greetings to their comrades waging the class struggle in Poland, France, Britain, Russia and the Balkans. Its resolution ended with the words: "Long Live the Workers' Youth International! Long Live the Class Struggle, the International Class Struggle Against War! Long Live the International Solidarity of the Working Class! Down with Imperialism! An End to World Massacre!"

The conference decisions became the young German revolutionaries' action programme. The newly established organisation played a very active role in all the workers' activities. Young workers took part in May Day demonstrations in 1916 and the protest movement against Karl Liebknecht's arrest and imprisonment.

Otto Franke played an important role in leading the youth movement after Karl Liebknecht's arrest. In Hamburg the young revolutionaries were headed by a young worker, Rudolf Lindau, and other leaders including Richard Gyptner.

Franz Mehring, Leo Jogiches and other members of the Spartacus League helped the young people to put out newspapers and contributed to them. Franz Mehring, for instance, wrote an article about Karl Liebknecht for *Freie Jugend* (Free Youth), a Berlin paper.

The Spartacus League, which, according to Walter Ulbricht, "was the largest Left-wing group in Germany... the vanguard of the most progressive section of the German working class", always devoted much attention to the youth movement.

Under its guidance young people took an active part in strikes at munition works, the May Day demonstrations in 1917 and other activities by the German workers.

The sailors' revolt in the summer of 1917 had a great impact on young workers. Max Reichpietsch and Albin Köbis, the two young sailors who led the revolutionary movement in the navy, were court-martialed and shot at the training grounds near Cologne on September 5, 1917. The sentences of other active members of the movement amounted to a total of 400 years' hard labour.

"I perish a victim of military justice," Albin Köbis wrote to his parents before his execution. "It is, of course, not easy to die so young, but I die cursing German militarism."

In a leaflet entitled "Take Their Lead", the Spartacus League called on the German workers to fight like the sailors had and follow their example of courage and self-sacrifice, so as to win a "socialist peace" in the decisive struggle. This call was answered and young people became very active in the German workers' struggle. Loyal to their internationalist duty, the young German



workers consistently fought for the unity of world youth.

The young German workers' organisation annually celebrated International Youth Day in response to the Youth International's appeal. The celebrations were particularly widespread on September 2 and 3, 1917.

The German military authorities did their best to prevent this day from being celebrated. The commanders of military districts ordered the immediate arrest of anyone distributing illegal leaflets calling for demonstrations and strikes on September 2 and 3, 1917. In their "warnings" to the public, the military authorities threatened hard labour or even the death penalty for anyone who took part in strikes, demonstrations and the distribution of leaflets. The young workers, however, were not to be deterred. This was a difficult test for the young workers' organisations, but they passed it with flying colours.

Thousands of best young German workers who fought in the ranks of the working class during the First World War joined the Spartacus League and later the Communist Party of Germany.

Analysing the struggle which the German working class was waging at the time, Ernst Thälmann stressed that the participation of young people in all the major revolutionary actions was of decisive importance. The young German workers had become the "most important buttress in the German Left-wing anti-war struggle".

In *France* socialist youth organisations were faced with a somewhat different situation. A large number of young workers who were members of the French National Federation were called up for active service. Not being constantly pres-

sured by the Left, the Executive Committee of the National Federation of Young Socialists openly took a social-chauvinist stand. The refusal of the Executive Committee of the NFYS to take part in the youth conference at Berne met with the approval of the socialist party leaders, who "decided to announce their support publicly".

Despite the ban by the Executive Committee of the NFYS, local youth organisations would have sent their delegates to Berne if the government had not refused to grant them passports. In their message of greetings cabled to the Berne Conference, the young French revolutionaries reaffirmed their solidarity with the young socialists of the world and pledged themselves to fight against militarism.

The French youth movement began to snowball after the Kienthal Conference in April 1916. The young people of Paris were especially active in the anti-war campaign. It was the Paris socialist youth section which re-established contact with the Youth International, declared its approval of the decisions adopted by the Zimmerwald Conference and pledged itself loyally to carry out its international duty.

The socialist youth movement in *Italy* was the strongest in Europe during the war. The Italian socialist youth organisation was among the initiators of the youth conference in Berne. Young Italian socialists held a congress in May 1915, at which they resolved to stage a general strike if Italy entered the war. It was the Italian youth organisations which first welcomed the decisions passed by the Zimmerwald Conference; they also took part in distributing the manifesto adopted by the conference. Although the government banned the celebration of May Day in wartime,



socialist organisations staged powerful demonstrations throughout the country on May 1, 1916 under the slogan "Down with the War! Long Live the Social Revolution!". Many members of the socialist youth organisation were arrested for taking part in the demonstration and for other actions.

In the *United States of America* the ranks of the Young People's Socialist League swelled considerably during the First World War. By the beginning of 1916 the League had 130 organisations with 4,000 members. Following the example of European organisations, US youth organisations began to spread anti-war propaganda as the country prepared to enter the war. In June 1916 the New York socialist youth organisation held its annual congress in Brooklyn, at which the main topics of discussion were militarism and the armament policy. The congress called on young people to protest against all military training, a stand which was also being taken by the European youth organisations at the time. It was only the lengthy debate on this question and Lenin's article "The 'Disarmament' Slogan" that helped the young people to abandon this incorrect policy.

Although the Young People's Socialist League of the USA joined the Youth International in 1915, owing to the war in Europe the only contact established between them was the exchange of literature and newspapers. But even this definitely contributed to the development of the socialist youth movement in the United States. In August 1916 the Young People's Socialist League of the USA wrote a letter to the Executive Committee of the Youth International, saying that in their supposedly free country they were struggling

against the same lawlessness which had brought the members of the Executive Committee into gaol. Thus, they could send their fraternal and comradely greetings, assurances of their deep sympathy and wishes of success in their work. They hailed the International and called for the overthrow of the rule of capital, capitalism and militarism.

The Young People's Socialist League intensified its anti-war propaganda and protest demonstrations when the United States entered the war. In 1917 the president of the Young People's Socialist League, William Kruse, published an open "Letter to Wilson", in which he condemned the government's imperialist policy. As a result, he was arrested and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for agitation. However government persecution of youth organisations merely increased the influx of new forces into their ranks, and by the end of 1916 they had 6,000 members.

In *Spain* socialist youth organisations also opposed the imperialist war and supported the decisions of the Zimmerwald Conference. By the beginning of 1916 the Young Socialist League had 108 local organisations (sections) with 3,779 members.

The young people took part in all the workers' economic and political actions. Socialist youth organisations and individual members of the Socialist Party formed the Left trend which took the stand adopted by the Zimmerwald Conference and opposed the imperialist war.

During the war youth organisations published five issues of the *Avanguardia* (Vanguard) newspaper, and then regularly began to put out the *Nuestra Palabra* (Our Word) newspaper. The league also issued the *Renovación* fortnightly



magazine, which had a circulation of 5,750. The young socialists held their fourth congress from November 27 to December 2, 1916, at which they discussed the political situation created by the war. The congress approved the decision adopted by the Kienthal Conference and entrusted the Central Committee of the Young Socialist League with the task of maintaining permanent contact with the Youth International. The congress was held under the slogans "Down with the War!", "Long Live Peace!" and "Long Live International Socialism!".

In *Switzerland* socialist youth organisations continued to spread anti-war propaganda despite the fact that their country remained neutral throughout the war. These organisations had 45 sections with 1,200 members before the war, 106 sections with 3,000 members at the outbreak of the war, and 120 sections with 3,500 members by April 1916. International Youth Day was celebrated widely throughout the country. In September 1916 the Swiss Government issued an order to use machine guns against the young people in the IYD celebrations. Youth organisations took part in anti-war demonstrations and clashes with troops.

The Social-Democratic Party and trade unions, which supported the government's policy, officially declared that they would set up a youth organisation to combat the young people's revolutionary actions.

Lenin was well acquainted with the young Swiss socialists and spoke highly of their organisations' activities during the war. When he was returning to Russia, he wrote on behalf of the Bolsheviks living in Switzerland: "To these comrades, whose views we share, and with whom we

worked hand in hand, we convey our fraternal greetings."<sup>1</sup>

In *Sweden*, where socialist youth organisations were a strong force in the country's socialist movement even before the war, the young workers rallied yet closer round the anti-war platform at the outbreak of the war. Acting against the Social-Democratic Party leaders' will, youth organisations stepped up anti-militarist propaganda among the civil population and the army. They held rallies and staged demonstrations calling for an end to the war. The Youth League was so popular that it had 10,000 members by the beginning of 1916.

The socialist youth organisation began to exert a strong influence on many members of the Social-Democratic Party, helping them to see through their party leaders' treacherous policies.

In early 1916 the young people called on the Social-Democratic Party leadership to hold an extraordinary congress to discuss party activity during the war, but the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party declined to do so.

The Youth League then decided to hold a conference of its own to discuss party activity. It was opened on March 18, 1916, and was attended by 265 delegates representing youth organisations, the Social-Democratic Party and the trade unions.

Chicherin, who carefully followed the work of the congress, wrote in a letter that the Youth League had strongly attacked the Social-Democratic Party leaders and had declared at the congress that in the event of further deviations by them from the party programme, it would support, at the elections, only those candidates who

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 368.



clearly pledged themselves to fulfil the programme.

The congress also discussed the possibility of using non-parliamentary means of struggle if Switzerland were to become involved in the war.

The congress resolution on this item stressed the importance of the non-parliamentary means of struggle against militarism, a struggle aimed at turning militarism into a weapon which the ruling classes could no longer use against the workers in their struggle for emancipation.

By setting "disarmament as its aim", the Youth League showed that it still harboured petty-bourgeois, pacifist illusions. Lenin explained the erroneousness of this slogan, which was being proclaimed by socialists in several countries, saying: "Our slogan must be: arming of the proletariat to defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie."<sup>1</sup>

Zeth Constantin Höglund, leader of the Young Socialist League, was arrested immediately after the congress for his vitriolic attack on the Social-Democratic Party and the government, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment for high treason.

Despite persecution, members of youth organisations stepped up their activities and strongly influenced the Social-Democratic Party's turn to the Left.

In Norway the socialist youth organisation responded to the war with strong protests. As early as August 2, 1914, the Youth League held a big rally, at which demands were made for holding trade union and Social-Democratic Party congresses. The young people were supported in

these demands by the progressive section of the Norwegian working class and by members of the Social-Democratic Party. In less than a year's time during the war, the Youth League grew by two thousand members.

The league took an active part in all the workers' actions and attached great importance to the spreading of socialist literature.

In *Denmark* the ranks of the Union of Youth continued to swell despite the fact that a large number of young people were called up for active service. The country had 61 youth organisations on January 1, 1914, 76 youth organisations by January 1, 1915, and 82 by December of the same year. In 1917 the Union had 8,500 members, compared to 5,700 in 1914.

The formation of the Zimmerwald Union in 1915 influenced the activities of Danish youth, who, like the young workers in other countries, wanted an international union and the formation of a militant front against war and capitalism. The *Forward* newspaper, the organ of the Union of Youth, was the only publication to print the Zimmerwald movement's appeal.

These are just a few facts about the Western youth organisations' activities, but they should suffice to show that, during the First World War, despite the bourgeois governments' brutal persecution and the hostile activities of the social-chauvinists, the young workers of Western Europe and the United States found the strength and courage to stand up openly for the international unity of all the working-class contingents and to oppose imperialism and war.

The unrelenting struggle waged by the Bolsheviks under Lenin's guidance played an important part in freeing the young workers from the social-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 96.



reformist ideas and taking a stand further to the Left.

Although the social-reformists still had definite influence on many young workers, it was these years that saw the turning point of the international movement of young workers, who took a firm revolutionary stand. This stand led to the establishment of an international communist youth organisation.

### 3. Emergence of Revolutionary Youth Organisations in Russia and Their Activities

The First World War roused broad sections of the working population to political action in Russia. Exhausted by the war, devastation and hunger, the workers and peasant soldiers rose up to topple autocracy, which they considered to be largely responsible for their misery. As the monarchy fell and the people won democratic freedoms, conditions were created for legal revolutionary activities. Many mass organisations were set up, which took an active part in the revolutionary movement. Lenin wrote: "Millions and tens of millions of people, who had been politically dormant for ten years and politically crushed by the terrible oppression of tsarism and by inhuman toil for the landowners and capitalists, have awakened and taken eagerly to politics."<sup>1</sup>

The first youth organisations were set up immediately after the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia in February 1917, but they were not connected with one another. Until then the

young progressive workers had taken part in the Bolshevik Party's illegal work, but this form of activity alone was clearly not enough once the young people had been roused to vigorous action. The young workers, most of whom did not know that there were special, independent youth organisations in other countries, realised intuitively that such organisations had to be set up in Russia.

Bourgeois party representatives tried, among other things, to use the spontaneous meetings and rallies to further their own ends, distract the young people away from the political struggle and confine the activities of youth organisations to "cultural work" and "self-education". However the young workers in Russia did not repeat the mistakes made by many youth organisations in Western Europe. The Russian bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties were prevented from deflecting young people from the workers' revolutionary struggle and turning youth organisations into non-political unions and societies largely because the Russian young workers' organisations were always helped and supported by the Bolshevik Party ever since they were set up.

The first Russian youth organisations were set up in Petrograd in April 1917 on the young workers' own initiative.

When she returned to Russia in April 1917, Nadezhda Krupskaya wrote several articles on the youth movement for *Pravda*, to inform Russian youth about the revolutionary youth movement in the West. She stressed that young people must take part in the economic and political struggle. She also emphasised the importance of the first step in the work of youth organisations, saying: "The youth organisation in Russia is now in the process of being formed. These first steps are of

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 61.



the greatest consequence. They are the ones that determine the course of the entire movement: they determine whether the youth organisation in Russia will be a workers' organisation, whether it will march hand in hand with the workers' organisation of its country and the Youth International ... or whether it will divorce itself from the working-class movement for a time."<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the Labour and Enlightenment Union in Petrograd showed that, had it not been for the Bolsheviks, the young workers could have followed the wrong lines and limited themselves solely to educational and cultural activities.

At Nadezhda Krupskaya's proposal, the Second Petrograd City Conference of Bolsheviks adopted the following resolution: "The conference considers that: 1) youth organisations must be workers' mass organisations, socialist in spirit and closely connected with the Youth International; 2) the Party must show every consideration for the emerging independent youth organisations; it must help them and send its members to establish close ties between the adult workers' movement and the youth movement. The conference therefore believes it necessary to support the youth organisation in Petrograd and to assist it in taking a form which will enable it to help train conscientious and active Party members, capable of coping with the tasks with which life will confront them."

When they heard about the establishment of the first socialist youth organisations, young Russian workers began to write to *Pravda*, asking how they should set up their own organisations. In

<sup>1</sup> N. K. Krupskaya, "Struggle for the Working Youth", *Pravda*, No. 59, May 30, 1917.

reply Nadezhda Krupskaya, who had studied the main errors made by youth organisations, such as the drawing up of their own party programmes and excessive involvement in cultural and educational activities, invited young people, in a special article on this question, to discuss her Draft Rules for youth organisations.

The Draft Rules envisaged youth participation in the workers' great struggle "to liberate all the oppressed and exploited from the yoke of capital". This was followed by a clause on the Russian organisations' solidarity with the international revolutionary youth movement. It stated that since the "Young Workers' League of Russia is loyal to the slogan 'Workers of all countries, unite!'", it hereby joins the Youth International and declares itself to be a section (a part of this International)"<sup>1</sup>.

Once the first working youth organisations were set up in Petrograd and Moscow, they mushroomed throughout the country. In May 1917 youth organisations in Petrograd alone had about 50,000 members, which was equal to almost one-half of the membership of the European socialist organisations in the Youth International.

The emergence of youth leagues greatly increased youth participation in the political and economic struggle. The young people, full of resolve, joined the ranks of the socialist movement under the banner of the Bolshevik Party. They took part in all the workers' activities and began to hold their own meetings and rallies.

In May 1917 *Pravda* carried a report on a young workers' rally and demonstration held in

<sup>1</sup> N. K. Krupskaya, "How Should the Working Youth Organise?", *Pravda*, No. 75, June 20, 1917.



Petrograd on the initiative of the factory youth organisations in the Vyborg District. The demonstrators carried banners saying "Long Live Socialism!", "Long Live the Third International!" and "The Young Workers Are the Pledge of Socialism!". One young man said in a speech: "We young people, who also have the experience of our fathers, will achieve socialism and bring their struggle to an end."

In preparing for the decisive struggle, the Bolsheviks took account of the youth organisations' enormous power and great revolutionary potentialities. Hence, the Sixth Party Congress, which dealt mainly with preparations for the socialist revolution, gave prominence to work among the young people. It adopted the following resolution: "The congress regards assistance to the class socialist organisations of young workers (in their establishment) as one of the most urgent tasks at the present time and calls on Party organisations to give the utmost possible attention to this work."

In determining the aims and organisation of youth leagues, the congress rejected the view that the leagues should engage primarily in cultural and educational work or that they should be a component part of the Party. Adopting Lenin's position, the congress recognised the organisational independence of the youth leagues, which were not subordinated to the Party, but were ideologically connected with and guided by it. The Party entrusted the young workers' organisations with the main task of achieving "the aim of developing the young workers' class consciousness by spreading socialist ideas, by a vigorous struggle against chauvinism and militarism and, at the same time, by defending the legal economic and political interests of adolescent workers, male and female".

The congress drew Party members' attention to the need for instilling in young people a keen sense of proletarian internationalism, which was so characteristic of most youth organisations in the European countries. It adopted a special resolution, entitled "Youth Leagues", which stressed: "With due regard to the experience of Western Europe, where independent socialist youth organisations, unlike those in the care of official parties, are almost everywhere the buttress of the international Left-wing of the working-class movement, our Party must see to it that the young workers establish independent organisations in Russia as well, organisations which are not subordinated to the Party organisationally, but which are connected with it only spiritually."<sup>1</sup>

The resolution also stressed that Russian youth must join the Youth International and that socialist ideas must be spread more widely among young people.

The decisions adopted by the congress played an important part in attracting young people into the leagues and helped provide youth organisations with experienced leaders.

When the congress was discussing youth leagues on August 2, 1917, the young workers at the Putilov Works held a general meeting, at which a worker by the name of Vasily Alexeyev, a congress delegate and a Bolshevik leader of the young workers in Petrograd, made an impressive report, and a message of greetings to Lenin was adopted with great enthusiasm. In its resolution the meeting expressed full support for the Bolshevik assessment of current situation and protested against the

<sup>1</sup> CPSU in the Resolutions and Decisions of Its Congresses, Conferences and Plenary Meetings of the Central Committee (Russ. ed.), Part I, Moscow, 1954, p. 386.



cruel persecution of the "vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat and army, that is, the Bolsheviks and their leaders". The meeting expressed "its deep contempt . . . for the socialist-revolutionaries and Mensheviks betraying the revolution". The resolution said: "We youths have learned from our fathers' bitter experience how dangerous it is to fraternise with the bourgeoisie."

The Bolsheviks explained the decisions adopted by the Sixth Party Congress to the young workers. In August congress delegates delivered a series of lectures and reports to the young people in Petrograd on such subjects as "The Sixth Party Congress and the Tasks Facing the Young Workers' Leagues", "The Current Situation" and "The Workers' Political Tasks".

Owing to the Bolsheviks' great preparatory work, the young workers' organisations in Petrograd were able to hold their first municipal conference on August 18, 1917. It was attended by delegates representing 13,000 young workers. D. Z. Manuilsky made the welcoming speech on behalf of the Bolshevik Party. A. Slutsky, member of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), made a report on the current situation, on the prospects of developing the revolution and on the part the young people were to play in the impending struggle. The conference proclaimed the establishment of the Petrograd Young Socialist Workers' League (YSWL) and adopted its Programme and Rules. The conference resolution gave a clear definition of the tasks of the YSWL; it stated that, as a political organisation, its activities must be aimed at preparing young workers "for a conscious and resolute struggle to liberate all the oppressed and exploited from the yoke of capitalism".

The conference declared that socialism was no longer a remote dream, and that the epoch of the "transition from the dissemination of socialist ideas to a direct struggle for the realisation of these ideas" had set in.

The young people in Petrograd soon gave a practical demonstration of their loyalty to the working-class cause and their readiness to defend it with arms.

The Petrograd workers' struggle against General Kornilov's counter-revolutionary rebellion was the first military trial of strength for the YSWL. During these difficult days the Bolshevik Party alone was able to mobilise the masses and repulse the conspirators. The Party was in close touch with the people through such mass organisations as the Soviets, the trade unions and the Red Guards. On its initiative the workers and revolutionary soldiers rose up to defend Petrograd, thus frustrating the schemes of the bourgeoisie.

The fact that the workers refused to obey the bourgeois Provisional Government's order to disband the Red Guards and hand over their arms played an enormous part in the defeat of General Kornilov and his men. The workers' Red Guards became the mainstay of the revolution. Seeing the danger facing the revolution, thousands of workers joined the Red Guards between August 26 and 30, 1917. They included many young workers who took an active part in protest rallies at all the factories and works in Petrograd, protesting strongly against the conciliators' treacherous policies and demanding the transfer of power to the revolutionary workers and poorest peasants.

At the time the YSWL directed all its activities at carrying out the Bolshevik Party's appeals, which the YSWL members regarded as battle



orders. The Petrograd Committee of the YSWL immediately began to mobilise young people to defeat the insurgents. Committee members held meetings and rallies in the various districts and enlisted men into the Red Guards. With the help of instructors, the young people quickly acquired military knowledge. The YSWL was steeled and consolidated as it fought under the Bolsheviks' leadership against the counter-revolutionary forces, and rallied the young people yet closer round the Party.

Enhanced by the defeat of General Kornilov and his men, the Bolshevik Party's prestige played a very important part in the establishment of a political army for the proletarian revolution. Using mass organisations, the Party carried on active work among the workers, soldiers and peasants, preparing them for the decisive battle against the bourgeoisie. The main task now was to consolidate ties with the masses. This became the aim of the activities carried on by the Petrograd Committee of the YSWL.

The enlistment of young people into the Red Guards and their military training continued. At the same time the Petrograd Committee and district committees of the YSWL carried on extensive political and educational work among the young people with the help of the Bolshevik Party. The YSWL organised a series of lectures and reports, which were delivered by the Party's best propagandists, including A. V. Lunacharsky, D. Z. Manuilsky, V. V. Vorovsky and M. M. Volodarsky. Courses were organised to satisfy the young workers' strong thirst for knowledge, and many circles and schools for learning and writing were set up. The cultural and educational commissions under the Petrograd city and district

committees of the Communist Party assisted the YSWL in its work. The Petrograd Committee of the YSWL also began to concentrate its efforts on defending the young workers' economic and legal interests.

Youth organisations served as the Bolshevik Party's reserve at a time when revolutionary enthusiasm was mounting in the country. At enterprises, youth committees helped with the work of the local Bolshevik organisations, trade unions and factory committees, distributed Bolshevik newspapers, and so on. Courses were given with a view to training agitators for work among the young people. Under the Bolsheviks' guidance, the young workers prepared for the decisive struggle against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

The upswing of revolutionary enthusiasm among the masses which followed the defeat of General Kornilov and his men also had an impact on the development of the Russian youth movement, which entered a new stage. The example set by the young people in Petrograd and the experience gained by the first socialist youth organisation helped young workers in other industrial centres become organised and set up their own leagues. The decisions adopted by the YSWL at its first city conference in Petrograd and published in the Bolshevik press played an important part in this.

Young people in Moscow set up their own organisation with the Bolsheviks' active support. As a result of district meetings, the first city conference in Moscow opened on October 8, 1917, and the young workers' league of Moscow was officially named the Third International.

As the youth movement developed in other industrial centres, the Central Committee of the



Bolshevik Party began to consider the question of holding an All-Russia Congress of Youth Leagues. The course of events produced other tasks of greater consequence, however, and the question of holding a congress was postponed for the time being.

The revolutionary developments in the country compelled the Party to concentrate all its efforts on preparing the masses for an armed insurrection. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks continued to devote a great deal of attention to the youth movement. Under their guidance young workers' leagues were set up in the Urals, the Ukraine, the Donets Basin, the Crimea, the Russian Far East, Transcaucasia and the Baltic areas.

The fact that a large number of leagues were called the Third International goes to show that the Bolshevik Party and its slogans had a strong influence on the young people, and that the young workers were imbued with the spirit of internationalism.

Under the Bolsheviks' guidance the workers, soldiers and young revolutionaries prepared for the decisive battle throughout September and October, 1917, and anxiously waited for the signal to go into action.

When the Bolshevik Party won a majority in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets, it became clear that now most workers were supporting it. In his letters Lenin wrote that, with the existing balance of class forces, the Bolsheviks could and should come to power, and that "the present task must be an *armed uprising* in Petrograd and Moscow (with its region), the seizing of power and the overthrow of the government".<sup>1</sup> He carefully

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 20.

worked out a plan for the insurrection, and demanded:

"The *most determined* elements (our 'shock forces' and *young workers*, as well as the best of the sailors) must be formed into small detachments to occupy all the more important points and to *take part* everywhere in all important operations, for example:

to encircle and cut off Petrograd; to seize it by a combined attack of the sailors, the workers, and the troops—a task which requires *art and triple audacity*..."<sup>1</sup>

At its meeting in September 1917, the Petrograd Party Committee stressed that YSWL members must be encouraged to join the Red Guards, since the young workers were assigned an important role in the plan for the armed insurrection.

Many young workers responded to the special appeal made by the Petrograd Committee of the YSWL to join the Red Guards.

On October 24 (November 6, New Style), 1917, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party gave the signal for the insurrection to begin. A specific task was entrusted to the Red Guard headquarters in every district. Such important points as the telephone exchange and railway stations had to be taken over, and the Cadets had to be prevented from opening the bridges. Several Red Guard detachments immediately made their way to revolution headquarters, the Smolny Institute, from where they were to storm the Winter Palace, the last bastion of the Provisional Government. The young people took an active part in the most important operations, displaying courage and selfless devotion to the cause of the working class.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81.



## Chapter II

### THE GREAT OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (1917-1919)

The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia ushered in a new era in the history of mankind, the era of the downfall of capitalism and the establishment of communism. The events in Russia strongly influenced the course of history, bringing the great achievements to the attention of working people the whole world over and promoting the development of the world working-class movement. Lenin said: "The Russian revolution has charted the road to socialism for the whole world and has shown the bourgeoisie that their triumph is coming to an end."<sup>1</sup>

The revolution in Russia, which broke the chain of imperialism at its weakest link, demonstrated the enormous power of the people of Russia and the whole world. Strikes were staged on an ever wider scale, and revolutions flared up in Finland, Austro-Hungary and Germany. Revolutionary actions shook the bourgeois system to the very foundations in France, Britain, Italy and Poland. The working-class movement in Europe grew and spread to other continents. The national-liberation movement grew rapidly in China, India, Indonesia, Turkey and other countries.

The victorious socialist revolution in Russia dealt a crushing blow to capitalism, which had

long been the prevalent system in the world. The Party Programme adopted at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU said: "The socialist revolution in Russia shook the foundations of the entire edifice of world capitalism; the world split into two opposite systems."

The historic importance of the socialist revolution in Russia, however, was not confined to this alone. Besides the impact which it had on other countries, on people's minds and on the course of history, it was also of great international importance, as Lenin said, in the narrow sense of the word. Lenin had in mind the experience gained by the Russian working class, which was faced with the difficult and noble task of setting up a classless society for the first time ever in the history of mankind.

Writing about this experience in the construction of a new, socialist society, Lenin stated: "The experience ... cannot be taken away, no matter how difficult the vicissitudes the Russian revolution and the international socialist revolution may pass through. It has gone down in history as socialism's gain, and on it the future world revolution will erect its socialist edifice."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin said that one of the basic differences between a bourgeois revolution and the socialist one was that the latter did not end with the mere seizure of power, but began with it. The enormous creative work which has to be carried out by the workers who come to power, and the construction of a new social system, form the main content of the socialist revolution. Lenin stressed that economic achievements would have a very strong impact on the working people in the capitalist

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 44.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 413.



countries and would be an effective means of disseminating socialist ideas.

In his speech at the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets, Lenin emphasised the international importance of the Great October Socialist Revolution, saying: "Our socialist Republic of Soviets will stand secure, as a torch of international socialism and as an example to all the working people."<sup>1</sup>

In Western Europe the workers' revolutionary movement failed during this period largely because the West still had no truly revolutionary party. Although most members of the Social-Democratic parties warmly welcomed the Great October Socialist Revolution, the leaders of these parties openly attacked the Bolshevik Party and the establishment of Soviet power in Russia.

By their blatant treachery, the Social-Democratic leaders helped the interventionists to suppress the revolutionary movements in Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1918, and prevented the Soviet republics from being consolidated in Bavaria and Hungary. Lenin wrote at the time:

"Europe's greatest misfortune and danger is that it has *no* revolutionary party. It has parties of traitors like the Scheidemanns, Renaudels, Hendersons, Webbs and Co., and of servile souls like Kautsky. But it has no revolutionary party.

"Of course, a mighty, popular revolutionary movement may rectify this deficiency, but it is nevertheless a serious misfortune and a grave danger."<sup>2</sup>

The question of setting up truly revolutionary parties became ever more pressing as the revolu-

tionary movement developed under the impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution and as the Left-wing forces, which opposed their leaders in the Social-Democratic parties, gained in strength.

In 1918 Communist parties were set up in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Austria, Hungary, Poland, the Argentine, Greece and Germany.

The need now arose to unite the revolutionary parties and set up a single centre to guide the world working-class movement.

Stressing the importance of the Bolshevik Party's work in uniting internationalist elements and laying the foundations for the Communist International, Lenin wrote:

"Bolshevism *has created* the ideological and tactical foundations of a Third International, of a really proletarian and Communist International, which will take into consideration both the gains of the tranquil epoch and the experience of the *epoch of revolutions, which has begun*."<sup>1</sup>

It now became possible to set up the Third Communist International, which the Bolsheviks had been urging ever since the outbreak of the First World War. In 1918 and early 1919 meetings were held by representatives of the Left-wing groups of the Social-Democratic parties, at which it was stressed that the situation called for the immediate establishment of the Communist International as the leading centre of the world working-class movement. The establishment of the Communist International opened a new chapter in the history of the working-class movement.

The movement of young workers, who took a very active part in the class struggle, was closely

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, p. 113.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, pp. 292-93.



linked with the workers' revolutionary activities. Influenced by the powerful revolutionary upswing, the Youth International increased its activities considerably in 1918. The war could no longer prevent the young revolutionaries' organisations from consolidating their international unity.

Full of admiration for the Russian workers' courage, the Youth International's revolutionary organisations heartily welcomed the Great October Socialist Revolution. Thousands of young workers in various countries were ready to take a direct part in the Revolution. The Youth International's central organ said at the time: "Young fighters would like to be in Russia themselves to support the revolutionaries there. We are convinced that, if they only had the opportunity, thousands of young Germans, Frenchmen, Belgians, Italians and Austrians would leave the trenches in their own country to fight along with the Russians against international capital. But this is not the correct road. The best and only possible road to international solidarity and support of the Russian revolution is the unremitting struggle against the bourgeoisie in one's own country."<sup>1</sup> Thousands of young workers who fought in the most difficult and responsible sectors of the class struggle sacrificed their lives for the cause of the working class, and thousands of members of the young workers' organisations joined the Communist parties. In Belgium and Spain, where there were no revolutionary trends in the socialist parties, the young workers initiated the establishment of Communist parties.

The young revolutionaries' unflagging vigour and courage, their staunch refusal to compromise

<sup>1</sup> *Jugend Internationale*, May 1918, No. 11, p. 6.

with the workers' enemies, and their strong conviction in the righteousness of their cause, won the admiration of the working class and brought their leaders high esteem.

### 1. Establishment of the Russian Young Communist League

As early as August 1917 the Bolshevik Party raised the question of holding an All-Russia Congress of the Young Workers' Socialist Leagues with a view to setting up a single revolutionary youth organisation. However, as already mentioned, the course of events brought new gigantic tasks to the fore, and the congress had to be put off for the time being.

The young people's active participation in the armed insurrection on October 25 (November 7, New Style), 1917, in the struggle for the establishment of Soviet power at the localities, and in the suppression of the bourgeoisie's counter-revolutionary actions played an important part in the establishment of an all-Russia organisation. This was a unique school where the young people received political training. The laws of class struggle, which were learned in practice, formed the basis of the young workers' world outlook.

On the initiative of the leagues in Moscow and Petrograd an Organising Bureau was set up under the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party to make preparations for the all-Russia congress. Nadezhda Krupskaya took an active part in these preparations.

The First All-Russia Congress of the Workers' and Peasants' Youth Leagues, held in Moscow from October 29 to November 4, 1918, was



attended by 176 delegates representing 22,100 young people. About 80 per cent of the delegates were workers and peasants. 88 delegates were members of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), 38 were sympathisers, 45 were politically uncommitted, one was a Left-wing socialist revolutionary, one an anarchist, and three were internationalist Social-Democrats.

The congress had to adopt a Programme and Rules for the league and determine its nature and tasks.

The congress unanimously approved (with two abstentions) the following definition of the main aim of the league: "The league, which is in solidarity with the RCP(B), sets itself the aim of spreading communist ideas and encouraging the young workers and peasants to take an active part in the construction of Soviet Russia."

In his opening speech at this First Congress of the Russian Young Communist League (RYCL), Comrade Y. Tsetlin said: "Comrades, the world socialist revolution is developing and a new life is being built before our very eyes; we must join in its construction as a powerful organisation. We are confident that our congress will be followed by an international youth congress."

On its opening day, the congress received a message of greetings from the International Bureau of Youth Organisations, which said: "We have learned with great joy from Russian comrades in Switzerland that a congress of young Russian socialists is being held today in Moscow. We were delighted at the news. The International Bureau and Swiss youth organisations send you their warmest greetings and best wishes... We are very glad to have become more closely acquainted with your stand, work and organisa-

tions."<sup>1</sup> German youth had also cabled a message of greetings to the congress.

The congress entrusted the CC RYCL with the task of establishing ties with Western organisations.

Immediately after the congress the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, which attached great importance to the RYCL, sent a circular letter to the Bolshevik Party organisations informing them of the establishment of the Young Communist League. It said: "The Russian Young Communist League is marching hand in hand with the RCP(B) in its struggle for communism and is spreading communist ideas among the young workers and peasants. Russia is drawing them into the active political struggle under the banner of socialist revolution and is defending their legal and economic interests."<sup>2</sup> The Central Committee stressed that the Young Communist League was an independent organisation, and called on local Bolshevik Party organisations to give all-out support to the league's local organisations while observing the young people's independence.

In spite of hunger and devastation the working people courageously fought against a host of enemies. The Russian people had to make an incredible effort to defend the gains of the Revolution, and the Communists were at the most difficult points of the struggle. The tasks of suppressing the bourgeois counter-revolution, establishing new state machinery, carrying out work in the countryside and cultural development called for an ever larger number of specialists loyal to the

<sup>1</sup> *Yuny Kommunist* (Young Communist), No. 1, 1918, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Y. Sverdlov, *Selected Articles and Speeches, 1917-1919* (Russ. ed.), Moscow, 1944, pp. 124-25.



cause of the working class and capable of performing all the duties entrusted by the Party.

In this situation the Party regarded the young people as its immediate reserve. The Bolshevik Party held its Eighth Congress in 1919. Its agenda included such important items as the adoption of a new Programme, and work in the countryside. The congress also discussed work among the young people and adopted the following special resolution: "The proletarian revolution demands an ever larger number of responsible workers and conscientious fighters. The rising generation of the working class and poor peasantry is faced with the gigantic task of taking an increasingly active part in revolutionary construction, and must be ready to continue and consolidate the Revolution. The fate of the Revolution largely depends on the successful fulfilment of this task."<sup>1</sup>

In this connection the congress stressed that the work which the Communist Party was carrying on among the young workers and peasants was of great importance. "The Party," it said, "must have well-trained reserves, from whom it can draw new honest and conscientious workers full of revolutionary enthusiasm."<sup>2</sup>

The young people could be educated in the communist spirit only if they took part in the revolutionary transformation of the country and developed their independence and initiative through independent organisations upholding the banner of communism. The Russian Young Communist League, said the congress resolution, was such an organisation. The congress therefore stressed that the league must continue, and charged Party or-

<sup>1</sup> CPSU in the Resolutions and Decisions... p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

ganisations with the task of rendering it the "most active ideological and material support"<sup>1</sup>.

The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party devoted a great deal of attention to the state of affairs in the RYCL and to the relations between local Party and league organisations. Great patience and tact were exercised to ensure that the Young Communist League organisations' work was channelled along the required course and their initiative was not shackled.

After the Eighth Congress of the RCP(B), the question of the relations between the Young Communist League and the Communist Party was discussed at the Plenary Meeting of the CC RYCL, held from April 26 to 28, 1919. The resolutions adopted at the congress and the plenary meeting formed the basis of directives worked out in August 1919 further elaborating relations between the RYCL and the RCP(B).

Confirming the resolutions adopted by the Plenary Meeting of the CC RYCL, the directives stressed that the Russian Young Communist League "accepted the Programme and tactics of the RCP", and that it was an "independent organisation possessing its own Rules and functioning under the control of the central and local Party groups"<sup>2</sup>.

The directives said that to develop political and educational work in the league, Party organisations must help the RYCL by agitation, arranging lectures, sending organisers to the league, assisting it in its political work and club activities, providing financial support, premises, and so on.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> "CPSU on the Young Communist League and Youth", see *Decisions of Congresses, Conferences and Resolutions of the CC CPSU, 1917-1958* (Russ. ed.), Moscow, 1958, p. 33.



To consolidate the communist nucleus of the RYCL organisations, an extremely important resolution was adopted by which Party members up to the age of 20 were to be RYCL members. In places where there were still no RYCL organisations, the local Party organisations were to be guided by the Rules and directives of the CC RYCL and take on the task of setting them up; for this, they were to pick out individual Party members, or resourceful groups from among both the young people and Party members. Those selected, who had to be below 20, were to form an active nucleus for the future RYCL organisation.

Party control over the league was ensured by a provision adopted at the Plenary Meeting of the CC RYCL, which said that "the CC RYCL is directly subordinate to the CC RCP(B)". Local Party organisations' control over the league was ensured by mutual representation; moreover, the RYCL representatives in the Party organisations had a deciding vote when matters concerning the RYCL were discussed.

In the case of youth organisations hampered by petty-bourgeois and kulak elements among their membership, the Party organisations were recommended to set up groups under the RYCL organisations to channel their activities along the communist course.

For their part, the RYCL organisations were to give all-out support to the Party organisations "by agitation during mobilisation, by holding demonstrations during elections to the Soviets and other bodies, and so on".

The directives ended by stressing that if the league was to carry on its work, it was necessary above all for the RYCL organisations to be independent in their actions. Party control over the

league was not to take the form of guardianship and petty interference in its activities. It was to be exercised within the framework of the RYCL Rules and the directives of the CC RYCL.

As the Civil War raged and foreign troops invaded the country, the Bolshevik Party repeatedly appealed to young people to take up arms and defend the gains of the Great October Revolution. The young workers responded enthusiastically to the Party's appeals. Thousands volunteered to go to the most dangerous areas of the front-lines. Fierce battles were being fought on all sides—in the Far East and near Petrograd, in the Volga area and up in the Far North by Kotlas.

During these difficult years the RYCL kept the Red Army well provided with replenishments, and special young people's regiments and battalions were set up. Hundreds of commanders and commissars were former members of the RYCL.

The first enlistments into the Red Army showed that a considerable amount of military and political training was needed in the rear. Young people were the first to respond to the Communist Party's appeal for people to join the general military training system. After work they would hurry from their factories and workshops to attend military training courses.

In the spring of 1919 a highly dangerous situation developed on the Eastern Front when Kolchak's army seized almost the whole of the Urals and advanced on the Volga. Together with the rest of the people, youth responded to the Party's appeal to defend the homeland. In May 1919 the first RYCL members were recruited for the front in accordance with the decision adopted by the CC RYCL.



The replenishments which the Eastern Front received soon enabled the Red Army to drive back Kolchak's army. Communist youth organisations were immediately set up in the liberated Ural areas. In Yekaterinburg gubernia alone, 88 youth organisations with about 10,000 members were set up in the two months following its liberation from Kolchak's forces.

That same year the Soviet Republic faced another grave threat. Denikin's armies were advancing on Moscow from the South. The Communist Party issued the appeal "All Out in the Struggle Against Denikin!", to which RYCL members responded ardently. Without waiting for general mobilisation, all the youth organisations in the country joined the Red Army en masse.

The RYCL opened its Second All-Russia Congress in Moscow on October 5, 1919, at a time when the Soviet Republic was having to fight hard for survival. The congress was attended by 429 delegates representing 96,000 RYCL members; 268 of them were Communists, 103 were sympathisers and 58 politically uncommitted.

Addressing the young people, *Pravda* wrote on the opening day of the congress: "During the Great Russian Proletarian Revolution the Young Communist League often showed a keen revolutionary sense; thousands of its members took up arms and joined the Red Army, and hundreds of them are now working as agitators, scouts and messengers at the front. This movement has to be intensified now: the league members' courage, valour and young vigour are now needed on our Southern Front, and the congress must issue this appeal to young Communists throughout Russia: 'To the Southern Front! To the Struggle Against Denikin!'."

Noting the grave situation at the front, the congress adopted a special resolution on the enlistment of league members into the Red Army. It called for the mobilisation of all league members who had reached 16 years of age, and 30 per cent of the individual organisations' membership in several front-line areas. The one exception was the Petrograd league organisation, as the Petrograd front was of particular importance.

However, if carried out this resolution would have led to the termination of the league's work. To prevent this, the CC RCP(B) issued a circular on October 16, 1919, to rationalise the enlistment of the league members. It proposed that mobilisation should be carried out gradually, with 25 per cent of the league members in the Moscow fortified area, and only 10 per cent of the league members in other areas.

Several other important questions were discussed at the Second All-Russia Congress of the RYCL. In its report, the Central Committee summed up the work carried out by the league since its first congress. Under difficult circumstances, when attention was concentrated largely on the fight against internal and external enemies, the CC RYCL managed to decide such questions as its organisational structure, relations between the RYCL and the RCP(B), the financing of the league and the training of workers for responsible posts. It also drew up rules for the admission of new members into the league.

The league performed some important economic and legal work. When Soviet power was established, it devoted much attention to improving the young workers' position. By a special resolution of October 29, 1919 the working day was reduced to six hours for those under 16 with the



retention of a full day's pay. Night shifts and overtime were banned for adolescents. The league's task was "to help the workers' bodies to implement the Soviet power's decrees on the improvement of the young workers' position"<sup>1</sup>.

This task was carried out through RYCL representation on the boards of the Department for Labour Protection and Social Security. A Report of the CC RYCL said: "The league must devote much attention to economic and legal work. This work will enable us to attract a larger number of young people into our ranks than mere agitation would."

The tasks of educating youth in the socialist spirit and of reorganising the school, tasks which could be coped with only in several years' time, were also closely bound up with the problem of providing young people with work. The league organisations took part in carrying out these tasks. They enabled classes to be held by providing equipment for school buildings, finding teachers, supplying firewood, and so on.

The CC RYCL attached great importance in its work to questions concerning co-operation with young people in the Western countries.

Ever since it came into being, the Russian youth movement was distinguished by its internationalist spirit. Immediately after their establishment, the RYCL organisations set themselves the task of studying the experience gained by youth organisations in Western Europe in their struggle over the years.

The Russian Young Communist League actively joined in the struggle to spread the communist

<sup>1</sup> *Second All-Russia Congress of the RYCL* (Russ. ed.), p. 50.

movement among young people all over the world. In its appeal of January 9, 1919, the CC RYCL called on the young workers of the world "to set up their own youth organisations, their young communist leagues. They must become the militant bodies of the revolution. They must unite all the young workers' active and revolutionary forces; they will give the working class new courageous and conscientious fighters for the communist revolution".

As most members of the Bureau of the Youth International were in prison, the CC RYCL took on the task of re-establishing it. It also endeavoured to hold a world congress of young workers. A commission was set up consisting of representatives of the CC RYCL and the Executive Committee of the Third International. The commission drafted the Programme and Rules of the Young Communist International, and theses on the main tasks facing the communist youth organisations throughout the world. It also passed a resolution to hold a world congress of young workers' organisations.

This congress was held in Berlin from November 20 to 26, 1919, and it proclaimed the foundation of the Young Communist International.

Russian youth sent Lazar Shatskin to the congress as their delegate with a mandate emphasising the need to set up the Young Communist International which would be "linked with the Third International" and which would "unite all the communist youth organisations".

The Second Congress of the RYCL issued an appeal to the young workers of the world, saying that the young workers at large share the same interests and the same enemies, i.e., the exploiters, and that the young Russian workers and peasants



"protest against the suppression of the communist youth movement and the arrest of its leaders".

The congress also issued an appeal to the young workers of France, Britain, the United States and other countries, saying: "Protest against your governments for interfering in the affairs of Russia, demand that they end their assistance to the Russian bourgeoisie's counter-revolutionary armies. Stage rallies, demonstrations and strikes; let the outcry of the young workers of the world be a stern and final warning to the bourgeoisie." It ended as follows: "We are confident that our appeal will evoke a response. We are confident that we will get a unanimous response, which will herald the downfall of bourgeois society."

The young workers in all the countries which were taking part in the military intervention in the Soviet Republic responded ardently to the appeal, and the working youth in Britain, France, Germany and Italy took an active part in the "Hands off Soviet Russia!" movement.

In an address to the CC RYCL, the Federation of the Young Socialists of Italy wrote: "Today, when you are exerting all your strength and are preparing to repulse new offensives by Poland, the hireling of the Entente, we warmly express to you our full solidarity and pledge that we will do everything in our power to help you. The 40,000 young Communists of Italy will do everything they can to prevent the dispatch of arms, equipment and provisions to counter-revolutionary Poland."<sup>1</sup>

In turn the young people in the Soviet Republic rendered assistance to their counterparts in the Western countries. In 1920 the Day of Assistance

to the Young People in the West was celebrated in Petrograd. *Pravda* wrote at the time: "At almost all enterprises young people donated one-, two- and three-day's earnings to the fund for the fighting Red youth in the West."

The news that the Young Communist International had been established did not reach Soviet Russia until much later. The Constituent Congress of the YCI in Berlin adopted a resolution saying that the establishment of the young workers' international communist organisation would not be announced until the delegates had returned to their countries. Lazar Shatskin, the delegate of the Russian Young Communist League, had difficulty in returning to his country, and therefore the establishment of the Young Communist International was not announced in the press until February 10, 1920.

This is an extract from what *Pravda* said about the great event: "The Young Communist International, for whose establishment politically-conscious young workers all over the world have been striving, is now a dream come true. Long Live the Young Communist International! Long Live the Guards of the Communist Revolution!"

The CC RYCL held a plenary meeting from April 15 to 20, 1920 to discuss the establishment of the Young Communist International. Its resolution said that it "enthusiastically welcomes the establishment of the Communist International and subscribes to all the resolutions adopted by the Berlin Congress.... The RYCL, which regards itself as a contingent of the international army of young workers, pledges itself to be a loyal member of the YCI".

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, June 27, 1920.



## 2. Young Revolutionaries in Western Europe and the USA

From 1917 onwards young workers became increasingly revolutionary, and important changes were made in the youth movement in various countries.

Young workers' revolutionary organisations took a very active part in the workers' mass actions in *Germany* from 1917 to 1919. Nothing could destroy the young people's revolutionary ardour, neither enlistment into the army nor the arrest of those who were most active. Youth organisations carried on illegal work under very difficult conditions. They continued to publish newspapers and leaflets, strengthened ties between individual groups in various parts of Germany, and planned joint actions.

Youth organisations made preparations to hold an all-empire conference shortly before revolution broke out in Germany in November 1918. The conference, held in Berlin on October 26 and 27, was attended by 57 delegates from 17 districts of Germany, from Berlin as well, and represented 4,000 league members. The conference reaffirmed the young people's adherence to the resolutions adopted at the conference in Jena in 1916, and strongly supported the revolutionary struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It also adopted a resolution to rename the German youth organisation the Free Socialist Youth of Germany.

The conference decisions had a strong impact on the development of the revolutionary activities of the young workers, who adopted the Spartacus League's stand. The young people began to set up their own Young Guard detachments, which

were sent to the most important areas of battle during the revolution in November 1918. The young German workers showed themselves to be among the best contingents of the working class, which fought courageously and selflessly for the power of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Germany.

The young people were inspired by their first taste of success. Besides taking part in the armed struggle, youth organisations vigorously began to carry on agitational and propaganda activities among the civilian population and the army. In late November the Free Socialist Youth of Germany started to publish its own paper, *Die junge Garde* (Young Guard). In assessing youth participation in the revolution of November 1918, Karl Liebknecht wrote in the paper's first issue: "The young revolutionary workers have been the hottest and purest flame of the German revolution up to now; they will be the hottest, most sacred and inextinguishable flame of the new revolution which must and will come, the social revolution of the German and world proletariat."<sup>1</sup>

The young people also took an active part in the battles of January 1919, when the revolution reached its height. Along with the progressive workers youth organisations began to fight against the overt counter-revolution. During this fighting the Central Committee of the Free Socialist Youth set up its own headquarters for the struggle in Berlin jointly with the youth leaders in the Berlin-Brandenburg district to defend the Communist Party's publishing house and other strategic points. Although they had no training and were

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Liebknecht, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, Bd. IX, Berlin, 1968, S. 629.



poorly equipped, the Young Guard detachments fought courageously and carried out their task.

Youth organisations adopted a firm revolutionary stand by taking an active part in the workers' struggle, but they made several grave errors on theoretical matters. Among the most important was their refusal to adhere to the political platform elaborated by the Communist Party of Germany in late December 1918.

Although the Free Socialist Youth of Germany recognised that its tasks were the same as those of the Communist Party of Germany, it nevertheless demanded that the youth movement should be independent politically and organisationally. Thus, the resolution adopted by the young Berlin workers' general meeting said: "The Free Socialist Youth recognises that its aims run parallel to those of the Communist Party of Germany. It expresses its warmest sympathy towards this party as the sole revolutionary party. . . . However, with the view of maintaining its independence, it refuses to join the Communist Party organisationally."<sup>1</sup>

The main reason why the young people took this stand appears to be because they were afraid of losing their independence. One need only recall the conditions with which the young German workers had been faced ever since youth organisations were set up. The Social-Democratic Party of Germany did its best to shackle the activities of youth organisations by carefully controlling their work and even by depriving young people of the right to elect their own leaders, who were appointed by the party.

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<sup>1</sup> *Die Jugend der Revolution. Drei Jahre proletarische Jugendbewegung 1918-1920*, Berlin, 1922, S. 364.

Another important reason for this stand was that during the First World War youth organisations, now no longer under the Social-Democratic Party's guardianship, took an active part in the workers' revolutionary actions and were often successful in their struggle virtually without party guidance. The young people began to believe in their "infallibility" and revolutionary commitment, and some of them gravitated towards vanguardism in the working-class movement. This was true not only of German youth.

The national congress, held in Berlin on February 22 and 23, 1919, settled the dispute among German youth organisations concerning the course of their further activities. The resolutions which it adopted stressed that the young workers strongly believed in the need to destroy the capitalist system, to establish a classless socialist republic and to transfer all power to the revolutionary workers' and soldiers' deputies. Moreover, they stated that the young people would readily defend the gains of the revolution by taking up arms and fighting against all counter-revolutionary actions. The congress also stressed that youth organisations must unite further and factory youth committees must step up their work.

Youth organisations soon changed their attitude to Party guidance as reaction mounted its offensive after the defeat of the revolution and as the young people began to take part in all the actions by the working class, which followed the Communist Party. The young workers grew increasingly sympathetic to the Communist Party, which stoutly defended working-class interests.

The young workers held their Third Congress in Weimar from October 18 to 20,



1919. It was the most important one to be held since the establishment of the youth organisation and was attended by almost 200 delegates representing 35,000 persons. It adopted a resolution which clearly showed that a radical change had taken place in favour of the communist movement. The youth organisations supported the idea of joining the Third International and of disassociating themselves from the supporters of neutralism and political uncommitment.

At its second and third national conferences, the Free Socialist Youth of Germany declared its support of the political programme adopted by the Communist Party of Germany. The leaders of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (ISDPG) tried to prevent the Free Socialist Youth organisation from taking the Communist Party's stand, and when they failed, set up their own youth organisation called the Young Socialist Workers.

As revolutionary feeling grew in the ISDPG and its members who supported a union with the Communists consolidated their stand, a change also took place within the Young Socialist Workers organisation. At its congress in Leipzig on November 7, 1920, the organisation adopted a resolution by 145 votes to 141 in favour of joining the Young Communist International and establishing a single communist youth organisation in Germany. Shortly afterwards the Left-wing of the Young Socialist Workers united with the Communist Youth of Germany.

It was then that the communist youth movement came into being in Germany. In September 1920 the Free Socialist Youth organisation was renamed the Communist Youth of Germany, which reflected the youth organisation's shift to

the Left and its adoption of the stand taken by the Third International.

Important changes were also made in the youth movement in *France*. As early as the First World War, when social-chauvinist sentiments prevailed in most of the young workers' official organisations, there was mounting opposition to the central leadership of the party and league. After the war several local youth organisations took the initiative in setting up a Provisional Committee, which began to re-establish the disintegrated organisations and reorganise the entire league. It also resumed the publication of the *Voice of Youth* newspaper and began to make preparations for a national congress.

The congress convened on June 23, 1918. After approving the Provisional Committee's work, several delegates stressed that a more efficient class organisation of youth must be established and that the young people must be more active in the workers' revolutionary actions.

After the congress local organisations began to encourage young workers to join the league. The Young Socialists' Federation of France made distinct headway in developing and consolidating local organisations, but it could not ensure their concerted action, which greatly reduced the effectiveness of its work. The main obstacle hampering youth organisations in their work at this time was the absence of a clearly defined attitude towards the Socialist Party, whose Right-wing leaders betrayed the interests of the working class during the world war. Another national youth congress was held on April 20, 1919, at which relations between the youth league and the Socialist Party were the main item of discussion.

The delegates held different views about the



Socialist Party. Some supported continuing relations with the party, while others favoured the Federation's independence. The latter maintained that the Socialist Party continued to pursue a treacherous policy towards the French working class.

The question was not settled at the congress. The workers' revolutionary actions and the establishment of the Communist International in March 1919 brought about a new upswing in the activities of young people, who launched a campaign for joining the Communist International.

The ranks of the Federation swelled owing to the fact that most youth organisations adopted a revolutionary position. In June 1918 there were only 37 youth organisations with 1,321 members, but by the summer of 1919 there were about 150 with over 10,000 members.

Youth leaders included such brilliant organisers and propagandists as François Billoux, Raymond Guyot, Georges Cogniot and Gabriel Péri, who later became prominent leaders of the Communist Party of France.

In *Italy* the ranks of the youth organisation were reduced considerably owing to mobilisation and the arrest of active members during the war. The government began brutal persecution of youth organisations when the young people took part in the workers' revolutionary activities. Youth leaders Italo Toscani, Giuseppe Sardelli, Luigi Morara and Federico Marinozzi were imprisoned on a charge of treason for trying to publish in Italian the manifesto of the International Bureau of Socialist Youth.

Youth organisations stepped up their activities when the war ended. Italian socialist youth organisations took an active part in all the

Italian workers' actions and initiated the movement for the defence of Soviet Russia and Hungary.

Italian youth enjoyed a very advantageous position compared with youth organisations in other countries. The Socialist Party of Italy gave the young people great freedom of action and did not impose its decisions on them, which produced excellent relations between the two and helped them to co-ordinate their revolutionary activities. The ties between the youth organisation and the party, and mutual representation on the central committees, made the youth organisation the party's helpmate in its revolutionary actions.

The young workers responded warmly to the young people's courageous and consistent struggle in support of the Italian workers' revolutionary demands and the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. The ranks of the Italian youth organisation swelled steadily and by mid-1919 it had about 27,000 members.

The young Italian workers supported the Communists and split with the Socialist Party when they saw that it was incapable of waging a decisive struggle for the workers' cause. On January 29, 1921, a week after the establishment of the Communist Party of Italy, the young people held a congress in Livorno, at which they agreed almost unanimously to rename their organisation the Communist Youth Federation and to join the Young Communist International.

The revolutionary developments in Russia had their first reverberations in *Finland*, where a revolution broke out in which the young people were very active. They helped to set up the Red Guard detachments which fought courageously against the Schutzkorps bands. Hundreds of young



fighters died in battle and in concentration camps after the revolution was defeated.

The young people held a congress in Moscow in August 1918 at the same time as the Communist Party of Finland was holding its constituent congress. This youth congress, which played an important part in the youth movement's development, adopted a decision to call it a "communist" congress. Faced with brutal persecution, Finnish youth organisations went underground to continue their struggle.

Soviet Russia, Finland's neighbour, furthered the growth of revolutionary feeling among Finnish workers and roused them to struggle in spite of government persecution. The ranks of the underground youth organisation swelled considerably.

In mid-1919 the Finnish Government was obliged to allow youth organisations to take part in trade union work. They thus became legal and could now gain strength more easily for the struggle.

News of the establishment of the Young Communist International and the resolutions it adopted were long in reaching Finland. A group emerged opposing adherence to the Young Communist International's decisions, which brought about a split in the youth organisation. Many members of the organisation followed the Bureau of the Young Socialist League, which passed a decision to join the Young Communist League. It was resolved to put out a new organ for the organisation, the *Young Worker* newspaper, since the opposition rallied round the old paper. The organisation retained its old name, the Social-Democratic Union of Youth, to remain legal. It began to play a very active part in the

struggle for uniting young workers on a revolutionary basis.

The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia and the revolution in neighbouring Finland gave a strong impetus to the youth movement in *Sweden*. The brutal suppression of the revolution in Finland, and the open preparations by the Swedish Government and bourgeois leaders for an armed intervention in Finland, produced a strong wave of protests throughout the country, forcing the Swedish militarists and bourgeoisie to render unofficial instead of open assistance to the Finnish bourgeoisie.

Swedish youth, who sided with the Left Socialist Party formed when the Social-Democratic Party split in 1917, took part in the movement for the establishment of Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The Socialist Youth of Sweden, an organisation which had for some time pursued an incorrect policy towards the imperialist war by supporting disarmament, began to wage a resolute revolutionary struggle under the impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution. In 1918 the organisation's central committee issued an appeal to young workers in which it stressed that the upswing of the working-class movement had to be used for achieving socialism's revolutionary demands. The appeal ended with the words: "Down with Civil Peace, Long Live the Revolutionary Unity of the Swedish Working Class! Long Live World Revolution!"

Swedish workers increased their revolutionary activity when a revolution broke out in Germany in November 1918. Youth organisations took a very active part in protest demonstrations against Carl Mannerheim, a traitor to the Finnish people,



and called for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia.

Daunted by the enormous scale of the working-class movement, the bourgeoisie hastened to reform the electoral system and reduce the working day. These miserable concessions appeased the Socialist Party leaders, and their betrayal destroyed the united front of the working class.

In Norway youth organisations took an active part in all the workers' protests from 1917 to 1919, the young socialists actually initiating a general strike. In 1917 and 1918 there was an attempt to establish Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in Norway. However since there was no revolutionary party to head the movement, the Councils did not become genuine organisations of the working people's power and existed for a few months only. Youth organisations joined the Left wing of the Labour Party of Norway in its activities and disseminated ideas of social change. In July 1918 youth organisations helped organise a general strike of about 300,000 workers at all the industrial enterprises to express solidarity with Soviet Russia.

Norwegian youth followed the developments in Soviet Russia with great sympathy. During the difficult period of the Civil War and intervention in Russia, they collected medical supplies and money for the starving. Norwegian youth protested to their government against the food blockade of Russia, and demanded that Norway take no part in it.

There was a similar situation in Denmark. In the absence of a revolutionary party, the bourgeoisie was able to suppress all workers' actions very rapidly. The only organisations which

consistently fought for social change in the country were those of the young people.

On April 17 and 18, 1919, the Young League held its annual congress in Slagelse, at which it reaffirmed its loyalty to the Youth International in the class struggle. The congress protested against the severing of relations with Soviet Russia by the Danish Government, and adopted demands for reducing the age qualification in elections to 21, for disbanding the Landsting (the upper house in the Danish parliament), and for establishing a republic and turning factories over to the working people.

When the Right-wing leaders of the Social-Democratic Party of Denmark responded coolly to the young people's revolutionary demands, the youth organisations withdrew from the party and joined the Socialist Party instead. The first unity conference, held on November 9, 1919, was attended by 55 representatives from 23 towns and cities delegated mainly by the Social-Democratic Youth League. The conference proclaimed the establishment of the Left Socialist Party.

In 1919 youth organisations in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, which had been in close touch with one another during the First World War, adopted a decision to hold an all-Scandinavia congress.

The congress opened in the Danish town of Hilleroed on August 17, 1919, and was attended by 80 delegates (30 from Denmark, 30 from Sweden and 20 from Norway) representing 50,000 members of youth organisations which had joined the Third International.

In addition to other problems, the congress discussed the youth movement in the Scandinavian countries and the league's educational work. It also raised the question of the need for the Youth



International to join the Communist International. The resolution which the congress adopted by 66 votes to 5 read in part as follows: "The congress is of the opinion that the Youth International must adopt the platform of the Third International, and that intensified agitational work must be carried out to acquaint the young workers with the use of the means and forms of organisation indicated in the fundamental and practical theses of the Third International."

In *Hungary* the young people provided loyal assistance to the Communist Party in its struggle against the internal and external forces of counter-revolution. The Communist Party of the new Soviet State of Hungary showed great concern for the young workers. The newspaper *Ürös ujsag* (Red Gazette), the organ of the Hungarian Communist Party, wrote at the time: "The young people want to learn, work and agitate; we must love them from the bottom of our hearts and help them in every way possible. Let us write on their banner on which they themselves inscribed the words 'We will no longer be oppressed workers' that they are the children of the workers' country."

The Communist Youth Organisation followed the example set by its elders and united with the Young Socialist League in March 1919. The leaders of the Young Socialist League were obliged to accept the conditions laid down by the Communist Youth Organisation, the most important of which were: "1. The young workers' movement shall be exclusively in the hands of the Communists, and those who have compromised themselves in the Social-Democratic movement shall not take part in its guidance. 2. The young communist workers' newspaper, *Az Ifju Proletár*

(Young Worker), shall remain the official organ of the united young workers. The editorial office shall remain in the hands of the Communists."

The unification of youth organisations played an important part in the development of the movement. *Az Ifju Proletár*, whose publication began on January 7, 1919, contributed greatly to the struggle for the establishment of workers' power.

The young workers held their first national congress on June 20 and 21, 1919, where they discussed the youth movement and the league's programme. After bitter disputes with Social-Democrats and anarchists, the congress adopted a resolution to rename the league the Hungarian League of Communist Youth. In his welcoming speech at the congress Béla Kun laid down the tasks to be performed by the young people during the revolution.

After the congress the young people fought even more resolutely for the consolidation of the Soviet Republic. When reaction mounted its offensive, they actively defended the republic. The collapse of Soviet Hungary forced the communist youth organisation to go underground.

It was at this time that the communist youth movement came into being in *Austria*. The young workers' organisation there ceased to be under the Social-Democratic Party's influence during the First World War. The Young Revolutionary Workers' League, an underground organisation, was set up in 1917. This organisation joined the Communist Party of Austria when it was established in November 1918, and took part in all the workers' activities.

The young league put out the *Young Revolutionary Worker* weekly newspaper and the



*Kommunistische Jugend* (Communist Youth) fortnightly magazine.

The young workers held their first congress in late August 1919, at which they adopted the league's Rules and Programme and announced that they were joining the Young Communist International.

Under the impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the wave of revolutionary activity in the West European countries, the youth movement and the working class swung sharply to the Left in the *United States of America*. The young people took part in all the American workers' mass actions.

The young American league held its congress in May 1919, at which it condemned socialists in various countries for trying to re-establish the Second International, and called for the immediate setting up of a new, workers' International and trade unions at enterprises. The congress unanimously adopted a resolution demanding the withdrawal of American forces from Soviet Russia. The delegates also discussed a number of organisational questions and adopted a decision on future agitational work.

Most league members successfully opposed the Right-wing elements' efforts to direct the youth movement along an educational, non-political course.

The German occupation in *Belgium* during the First World War led to the complete cessation of the once powerful movement of young workers. The Belgian youth organisation, Young Guards, which Lenin held in high esteem, had been active in spreading anti-militarist propaganda before the outbreak of the war.

After the country was liberated from German

occupation, the newly established youth organisations that were members of the Young Guards joined the Workers' Party, then predominantly reformist in spirit. The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia and the revolutionary activity in the West European countries, produced a revolutionary upswing in Belgium, and youth organisations began to oppose the leaders of the Workers' Party with growing resolve. The first communist youth group in Belgium was set up in Brussels in January 1920 on the basis of the most oppositionally-minded organisation, the Brussels League of Socialist Youth Organisations. It published a manifesto announcing its support of all the decisions adopted by the First Congress of the Communist International with the exception of the question of parliamentarism and participation in the parliamentary struggle.

The communist youth group of the Walloon Federation held a congress in May 1920, at which it worked out the communist federation's Programme and Rules.

The communist federation began publication of the newspaper *Ouvrier Communiste* (Communist Worker). The growing influence of the communist youth group and its active fight against the reformists in the Workers' Party, led it to assume the name of Communist Party of Belgium.

In *Spain* socialist youth organisations, which had been brutally persecuted by the government for their vigorous anti-militarist activities before and especially during the war, adopted an extreme Left-wing oppositional stand in the Socialist Party.

Spain experienced a revolutionary upswing as well. Strikes at industrial and communal enterprises, and stoppages by railway workers, became



common between 1918 and 1920. They were headed by young socialists, who urged the workers to fight resolutely and called for the use of revolutionary methods. The youth organisations enjoyed exceptionally high prestige and won over the Left wing of the Socialist Party to their side.

The Socialist Party held an extraordinary congress in December 1919, at which the question of joining the Communist International was discussed at the opposition's request. The party leaders, however, managed to have the proposal rejected by a small majority.

The young socialists held their fifth congress in late December 1919, where they reaffirmed their loyalty to the cause of proletarian internationalism and resolved to join the Young Communist International. A few days later the National Committee of the Socialist Youth League addressed the following letter to local organisations: "Dear Comrades! Our league of young socialists has now held its fifth congress, at which we adopted a resolution of great importance to us that clearly expresses our views and stand on the most important question of concern to the whole world: the dictatorship of the working class in Russia and the Bolshevik Socialists' exercise of political power! Having unanimously supported the Third International, as has already been reported to the Moscow secretariat, we have declared what our programme, our attitude and dearest aims are."<sup>1</sup>

For the next three months the Socialist Youth League hoped that there would be a split in the Socialist Party, which would lead to the establishment of the Communist Party. The Socialist

<sup>1</sup> *Die Jugend der Revolution. Drei Jahre proletarische Jugendbewegung 1918-1920*, S. 320.

Party, however, continued to vacillate between the position of the Second and Third Internationals. The young socialists' congress then took the initiative in setting up the Communist Party. In its manifesto of April 15, 1920, it informed the Spanish workers of the establishment of the Communist Party of Spain. The manifesto briefly formulated the party's programme as follows: "1) Recognition of the Third International; 2) struggle against the reconstructors; 3) struggle against national militarism; 4) advocacy of the socialist revolution; 5) struggle against minimum demands and opportunism; 6) the use of parliament for revolutionary agitation only; 7) renunciation of any joint struggle with bourgeois parties and groups; 8) struggle against reformism in the Spanish Socialist Party; 9) establishment of a communist trade union which would include the radicals of the General Workers' Union and the All-Spain Labour Union; 10) recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Councils as its executive bodies."<sup>1</sup>

The newly established party had a comparatively large membership, since by the time of its proclamation the Socialist Youth League had about 10,000 members and over 140 sections in various parts of the country.

There were no youth organisations in Spain for several months after the Communist Party was established, but in the autumn of 1920 a group of young Communists took the initiative in reviving the youth movement and setting up the Communist Party's reserve, the Young Communist League, for all the young workers.

That autumn harsh repressive measures were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 322-23.



taken by the government, forcing the Communist Party and the Young Communist League to go underground, but they did not abandon their courageous struggle against the capitalist system.

The part which the Young Communist League of Soviet Russia played in youth organisations' activities during 1918 and 1919, can scarcely be exaggerated. Ever since it was set up, the league supported the young workers' international unity and the establishment of close ties between youth organisations in various countries. In 1918 and 1919 the young Soviet people's newspapers and the special leaflets *Yuny Kommunist* (Young Communist) and *Krasnaya Molodyozh* (Red Youth), issued by central and local newspaper offices, appealed ardently for the establishment of an international youth organisation. The Young Communist League organisations in Soviet Russia admired the young workers' participation in the workers' actions in Western Europe during the First World War and particularly during the revolutions in Finland, Germany, Hungary and other countries. Young people in Soviet Russia saw that they had to make use of the long years of experience gained by the West European youth organisations in their work, and that at the same time they had to take account of the errors which these organisations had made on several important organisational and tactical questions, such as the absence of centralisation, the establishment of organisations on a territorial basis and the denial of the leading role of the Communist parties.

The Russian Young Communist League was among the first youth leagues to propose that a world congress of young workers should be held to discuss the urgent tasks facing the youth movement at a time when there was a powerful revo-

lutionary upsurge among the workers, with a view to setting up a world league of young workers on a new communist basis.

### 3. Establishment of the Young Communist International

The setting up of the Communist International marked a turning point in the history of the youth movement.

Immediately after the First Congress of the Communist International, it was decided to set up an international communist youth league.

Lenin welcomed the meeting which was to be held between representatives of the youth organisations of Germany, Hungary and Russia, and stressed that the young revolutionaries must be rallied round the platform of the Third International.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International, which attached great importance to youth participation in the workers' revolutionary movement, issued an appeal "To the Organisations of the Proletarian Youth of the World" in May 1919, in which it mentioned the great services rendered by the youth movement during the world war and called on young people to unite on a new, revolutionary basis. It said: "Now is the hour to organise the International of youth. The young workers of the world must definitely choose their path. The Communist International, founded in Moscow in March 1919, summons all young organisations to join its ranks. The Communists look upon the work amongst the youth, as one of the most important and pressing tasks."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 2, 1919, Petrograd, p. 242.



The appeal gave a very strong impetus to the unification of youth leagues in various countries that took a revolutionary stand. The Bureau of the Youth International passed a decision to hold an international congress in May, but later postponed it to August 1919. It was originally planned to hold the congress in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, but the collapse of the revolution there meant that it had to be held elsewhere.

After lengthy preparations a conference was held in Vienna in August 1919, attended by delegates representing the communist youth organisations in Russia, Germany, Hungary, Austria and Poland, and the young socialist workers in Austria. The conference elected a Preparatory Committee of the Congress which consisted of five members and acted as a temporary Executive Committee for the Youth International.

Before the congress could be held, the question of who should attend it had to be decided. Before the war the Youth International had embraced all youth organisations, but when preparations were being made for the congress, it was decided to invite only those organisations which supported the platform of the Third International.

The Young Communist International opened its Constituent Congress in Berlin on November 20, 1919. The sessions were held illegally, and often the delegates were compelled to move to new premises. The premises where the sessions were held had to be closely guarded, because the Scheidemann Administration, widely known for its brutal persecution of revolutionary organisations, was then in office in Germany.

The congress, which was represented by 14 young workers' organisations, adopted the following agenda at its first session: 1) local reports on

the state of the youth movement; 2) world situation; 3) Communist International's basic political programme: the young workers' manifesto; 4) organisational rules; 5) report on the work of the International Secretariat and Organising Bureau; 6) tasks facing youth organisations during the dictatorship of the proletariat; 7) elections; 8) miscellaneous.

After brief welcoming speeches the congress adopted an address "To the Russian Proletariat", which stressed that the young people of the world were full of delight and admiration for the courageous workers of Russia who had taken over power. It read: "It is with particular love and respect that the congress addresses the Russian Communist Party and the Young Communist League, which, under Lenin's guidance, has led the way and marched in the vanguard of the great struggle, and welcomes among the present delegates of the Russian communist youth organisation those representing Russian socialism, which has been the symbol of revolution for the workers of the world."

Lazar Shatskin, the RYCL representative, delivered the first report at the congress, in which he outlined the history of youth organisations in Russia and the present tasks facing the young Russian workers. He stressed that the young workers' position had greatly improved in the two years following the establishment of Soviet power. Laws regulating the employment of young people had been introduced in Russia, and youth organisations, as well as the state and trade unions, were responsible for seeing that they were observed. A commission had been set up for this purpose.

Youth organisations were making great progress with cultural and educational activities, particularly in the towns and cities, where the young



workers, while studying themselves, carried out an enormous amount of work among the broad sections of the population.

In his report Lazar Shatskin stressed that the RYCL was working in close touch with the Communist Party. Its relations with the Party were based on the following principles: "1) Adoption of the RCP Programme; 2) political subordination of the young people's Central Committee to the Party's Central Committee; 3) subordination of the youth league's local groups to the local Party organisations; 4) entry of all Party members under 20 into the youth league; 5) mutual material and ideological support."

During the Civil War the young Russian workers, who warmly welcomed and took a very active part in the Great October Socialist Revolution, were rendering enormous assistance to the Red Army in military operations at all the various fronts. The young people were defending the world's first workers' state with arms. The membership of Russian youth organisations was constantly growing. By August 1919 they had 80,000 members.

Johann Lekai made a report on the Hungarian Young Communist League. A representative of the HYCL, he described the league's activities during Soviet power in Hungary. He dealt at great length with the relations between the Social-Democratic and Communist parties, the young workers' heroism during the revolutionary battles and the league's achievements during the four months of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and assured delegates that the young Hungarian workers would continue to be the workers' militant contingent despite brutal persecution in the country.

Other speakers made reports on the youth movement in France, Switzerland, Poland, Rumania, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Italy and Germany.

On the third day of the congress, the representative of the Communist International made a report on the international situation. In the discussion that ensued, various views were expressed on the nature and methods of the class struggle in various West European countries and on the attitude to anarchism and Social-Democracy.

This was followed by Willi Münzenberg's report on the basic draft political programme of the YCI, which aroused heated debate because, instead of taking account of the specific situation of the working class in individual countries and the presence or absence of strong revolutionary organisations, it gave a general recipe for all the questions concerning the youth movement. The delegates justly criticised the programme provisions on the youth organisations' cultural, educational and athletic work; they also touched upon some very important political problems, such as the significance of the parliamentary struggle and participation in strikes.

A particularly heated debate broke out over the question of the YCI's entry into the Third International. Several delegates maintained that the inclusion of the Young Communist International in the Communist International would pose a danger to the greatest asset, the independence of national organisations, and advocated the equality of the YCI and the Communist International in the solution of the revolutionary movement's tactical problems.

Owing to the fear of losing independence and the failure to see the importance of democratic



centralism in the working-class movement, the congress adopted a compromise resolution. It was, however, resolved by 17 votes to 8 that the Young Communist International should adhere to the Communist International's platform.

The congress also adopted without any substantial amendment the Young Communist International's organisational rules proposed by the presidium. Lazar Shatskin also made a report on the tasks facing youth organisations after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The congress manifesto, a striking reflection of the vanguardist views expressed by most of the delegates, made no mention of the Communist parties' leading role in the revolutionary movement, but gave prominence to the youth leagues. It said in part: "As always in all phases of the revolutionary class struggle we must be the vanguard of the masses. We must lead the way."

Despite its grave errors, especially those of the vanguardist type, the congress was of great importance to the youth movement's development and its unity under the banner of internationalism. By freeing the young communist leagues from the reformists' guardianship and formulating, though still somewhat vaguely, the tasks facing the youth movement, the congress marked a new stage in the young people's revolutionary movement.

As William Foster noted, the establishment of the Young Communist International became "an important step in the gathering of the new revolutionary forces"<sup>1</sup>.

After the congress the communist and socialist student organisations in the West European countries held an international congress in Geneva in December 1919, which supported the platform of the Communist International and declared its solidarity with the working class. The congress also supported the decisions adopted by the First Congress of the Young Communist International and declared its adherence to them.

In its message of greetings to the congress, the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International said: "Comrades! The international proletarian youth, who believe in the class struggle and have lately united into the Young Communist International, hail with much joy the meeting of the International Congress of Communist Students of both sexes, who boldly speak out in favour of an International of the Working Class and of world revolution."<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Committee of the Young Communist International, which was elected at the First Congress of the YCI and took an active part in carrying out the congress decisions, made rapid headway in the organisational consolidation of the youth leagues. The Executive Committee of the YCI held several international youth conferences to acquaint youth organisations with, and disseminate, the decisions of the Berlin Congress. In mid-December 1919 the representatives of the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland) held a conference in Stockholm. It was followed by a conference of Southeast European youth organisa-

<sup>1</sup> W. Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals*, N. Y., 1955, p. 293.

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 11-12, Petrograd, 1920, pp. 2539-40.



tions in Vienna in May 1920, which was attended by delegates from Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Italy. The same month French and Italian youth organisations held a conference in Milan.

Although these conferences, held to discuss the youth organisations' practical tasks, adhered to the decisions adopted at the Berlin Congress, the presence of "ultra-Left" trends began to be clearly felt in the Young Communist International. These trends, which supported revolutionary actions "at all costs" and advocated an immediate revolutionary insurrection, took no account of the objective situation in 1920, when signs of the revolutionary movement's defeat first began to appear in Western Europe.

The Bureau of the Young Communist International held its first session in Berlin from June 19 to 23, 1920. It was attended by 20 representatives from 14 organisations, and was in essence a continuation of the First Congress of the YCI. At the sessions of the Bureau differences arose over relations with Communist parties. Although the First Congress of the YCI had defined relations between the Young Communist International and the Communist International, youth leagues took an incorrect stand towards individual Communist parties in the West European countries. They refused to adhere to the decisions adopted by the Communist parties, demanding that youth organisations should be fully independent of these parties, while working in "close militant solidarity" with them. Although the first session of the Bureau reaffirmed that youth organisations would not advance their own political programme, this did not change the situation

concerning the relations between the youth leagues and the Communist parties.

These differences between the members of the YCI Bureau arose at a time when the opposition in several Western youth organisations had been supporting the youth leagues' political independence.

The Young Communist International's central organ, the *Youth International* magazine, began to carry articles justifying the stand taken by the opposition. In its issue of February 1920, it published an article entitled "Independence of Youth Organisations", in which the anonymous author tried to justify the demands for ideological independence. He said in part: "The desire for political independence is justified in that the young people need independence to engage freely on a neutral basis in socialist education, which is the movement's sole and main aim."<sup>1</sup>

This fear of losing independence made youth organisations adopt an increasingly vanguardist position. Unable to understand the situation properly, the leaders of the Young Communist International could not decide what attitude to take towards the declarations made by the Left wing of the Communist International and the schemes of the opportunists in the working-class movement.

Some YCI leaders supported a break with the Communist International and opposed the party programme and party guidance. An example of this is the article "The Young and the Old" in the *Youth International* magazine, which maintained that "all efforts to tie down the young people to the existing programme of the Communist or some

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<sup>1</sup> *Youth International*, No. 2, 1920, p. 39.



other party must be strongly rebuffed in the interests of youth and the working-class struggle. Organisational independence is absolutely nothing without ideological independence".<sup>1</sup>

The Young Communist International's central organ did not reject these views strongly enough. What is more the YCI Executive Committee actually supported statements favouring YCI's independence and sympathising with Left-wing trends in the Communist International. The members of the Executive Committee were in favour of increasing ties with the Provisional Bureau in Amsterdam of the Communist International, which operated as a section of the Secretariat of the Third International and which was in the hands of the Dutch opportunists, who soon broke with the Communist International.

It was at this time that Lenin's book *"Left-Wing" Communism—an Infantile Disorder* appeared. He wrote it in 1920 because "Left-wing communism" was strongly threatening the newly established Communist parties in the West. It was a programme document which showed them the way and the means to win prestige among the working people and throw off the yoke of capitalism.

The first Communist parties to be set up in Western Europe, where for several decades the working-class movement had been led by the socialist parties, were faced with organisational difficulties owing to their lack of experience and poor theoretical training. They drew the wrong conclusions because of their justified hatred of Right-wing socialist parties' treacherous policies.

Lacking adequate theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the political struggle, they completely rejected all forms and methods of struggle used by the parties of the Second International, and refused to work in mass organisations headed by opportunists. Lenin made a thorough analysis of the class basis of the opportunism of the Second International's socialists. The privileged position of certain European states with extensive colonial possessions had led to the formation of the so-called labour aristocracy among the working people. This "aristocracy" had seized power in the socialist parties and trade unions. To retain its position, it had betrayed the workers' interests. Lenin wrote: "The leaders of this labour aristocracy were constantly going over to the bourgeoisie, and were directly or indirectly on its pay roll."<sup>1</sup>

Not seeing the class roots of the betrayal by the socialist leaders, the Communists in the West opposed all leaders and countered the "party of the leaders" with the "party of the masses".

The Communist Party cannot fulfil its key organisational role and act as a coherent organisational force if it were not headed by the most conscientious and best representatives of the working class, that is, by persons who were devoted to the working-class cause, fully conversant with the Marxist theory and experienced in the political struggle. At the same time the most talented and loyal leaders could not lead the party to a victorious proletarian revolution if the working class, of which it was a part, did not firmly support it and if its programme were not dear and clear to the working people.

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 2/17, 18, 1920, pp. 36-37.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 42.



Moreover, the working class could not achieve a successful revolution without the support of the broad sections of the working people. To ensure an alliance with them and set up a political army of the proletarian revolution, the workers' party must support all the revolutionary actions by the working people and defend their interests. The revolution would be victorious only if all the links in this chain were strongly connected with one another. The denial of the role of leaders undermined the Party.

The Communists in the West were committing a serious error by compromising. In their efforts to keep "peace" within the party, the socialists were compromising with the bourgeoisie and thus openly betraying the interests of the working class. The "Left-wing Communists" therefore chose to reject all compromises.

Lenin showed that the Party must take the concrete situation into account and, without failing in its loyalty to the cause of the proletarian revolution, could and should make temporary and partial concessions to attain its main goal: victory of the revolution.

The desire to keep parties legal led the socialists of the Second International to repudiate the main aims and tasks of the working-class movement, that is, to repudiate the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the victory of the revolution. The working-class movement was reduced to a struggle for individual concessions and reforms within the framework of the existing capitalist society; moreover, the socialists regarded parliamentary struggle as the main means of struggle.

Forgetting that the Bolsheviks as well as the socialists had experience in the revolutionary

employment of the parliamentary forms of struggle, many Communists in Western Europe declared that parliamentarism was "historically outdated", and that the Communists should take no part in parliament, since this would lead to a betrayal of working-class interests.

Citing the Bolshevik group's struggle in the Fourth State Duma as an example, Lenin showed clearly that communist participation in the parliamentary struggle could be of really great importance to the cause of the proletarian revolution. In the West, where the traditions of parliamentarism were very deeply imbedded and where parliament was an important means of communication with the people at large, the Communists must use the parliamentary platform to expose the bourgeois and their socialist underlings, and to win the broad sections of the working people over to their side. Lenin wrote: "It is because, in Western Europe, the backward masses of the workers and—to an even greater degree—of the small peasants are much more imbued with bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices than they were in Russia; because of that, it is *only* from within such institutions as bourgeois parliaments that Communists can (and must) wage a long and persistent struggle, undaunted by any difficulties, to expose, dispel and overcome these prejudices."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin also said that the Communist Party must be flexible, and that the Communists must choose those forms and methods of struggle which are best suited to the tasks facing the revolutionary movement at the given stage. He wrote: "Tactics must be based on a sober and strictly objective

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 65.



appraisal of *all* the class forces in a particular state (and of the states that surround it, and of all states the world over) as well as of the experience of revolutionary movements.”<sup>1</sup>

He said that the aim was to set up a truly revolutionary parliamentary group in the European reactionary parliaments, and to use parliamentary elections and parliamentary platforms in a revolutionary and communist way. Only then, he maintained, would the work “constitute useful and fruitful revolutionary work that will simultaneously train the ‘leaders’ to be worthy of the working class and of all working people, and train the masses to be able properly to understand the political situation and the often very complicated and intricate tasks that spring from that situation.”<sup>2</sup>

Lenin also attacked the attitude of “Left-wing Communists” to the reactionary trade unions. In order to carry out a socialist revolution, the Communists not only had to win the conscientious vanguard of the workers to their side, but convince the people that a revolution was necessary and organise them into a militant revolutionary army. This involved work among the masses by all the existing workers’ organisations.

Trade unions, set up in the epoch of capitalist domination and led by opportunists, inevitably showed “*certain* reactionary features, a certain craft narrow-mindedness, a certain tendency to be non-political, a certain inertness, etc.”<sup>3</sup>

It would, however, be utterly wrong to hope for the establishment of new “pure” trade unions. The

Communists must join the existing reactionary trade unions and do their utmost to educate the masses, win them over to their side and isolate them from the opportunist leaders. The fact that in the West the trade unions had a more powerful “*craft-union, narrow-minded, selfish, case-hardened, covetous, and petty-bourgeois ‘labour aristocracy’, imperialist-minded, and imperialist-corrupted...*”<sup>1</sup> than in Russia merely meant that the Communists in Western Europe would have a longer and harder struggle.

But this struggle had to be waged relentlessly until all the opportunist leaders were completely disgraced and expelled from the trade unions. Lenin wrote: “To refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward masses of workers under the influence of the reactionary leaders, the agents of the bourgeoisie, the labour aristocrats, or workers who have become completely bourgeois.”<sup>2</sup>

After giving a detailed analysis of the mistakes made by the “Left-wing Communists” and indicating the causes of “Left-wing communism”, Lenin stressed that this “infantile disorder” was growing pains, and said he was convinced that the Communist parties in the West would get over it quickly. He wrote: “Communists, adherents of the Third International in all countries, exist for the purpose of *changing*—all along the line, in all spheres of life—the old socialist, trade unionist, syndicalist, and parliamentary type of work into a *new* type of work, the communist.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.



Lenin's book was of decisive importance to the Communists in the West European countries in overcoming the errors made by the Left-wing deviationists.

The mistakes of the newly established Communist parties were also made by youth organisations who were experiencing the same growing pains. For them Lenin's book was therefore not only a theoretical programme, but also a direct guide to action; it showed them the methods which had to be used in the struggle for the young working people. Much work had to be done, however, before youth organisations took their place in the ranks of the progressive fighters in the Communist International's section.

Lenin wrote that Bolshevism had worked out the ideological and practical foundations for the establishment of the Communist International. This in turn solved the question of the Party guidance of young people and helped to overcome the incorrect notion that they should play the leading part in the communist and workers' movement.

The need for the YCI to convene its second congress to settle the disputes concerning relations between youth organisations and Communist parties was so obvious that it aroused no objections. When the Bureau of the Young Communist International held its session in Berlin in July 1920, most delegates supported the proposal to hold the congress in Italy in March 1921.

Some delegates, including RYCL representatives, had suggested that the congress be held in Scandinavia, and when most of the YCI Bureau members were disinclined to accept this, the RYCL delegates proposed that it should be held in Moscow at the same time as the congress of the Communist International if the "young commu-

nist leagues were sufficiently represented" at the latter.

The Executive Committee of the YCI rejected the proposal to hold the YCI congress in Moscow, but accepted the invitation to take part in the Second Congress of the Communist International. Youth leagues in the West European countries also received invitations to take part in the Second Congress of the Communist International; most of them accepted and sent representatives to Moscow accordingly.

The Second Congress of the Communist International, held from July 19 to August 7, 1920, concentrated its attention on the question of consolidating the young Communist parties and on the tasks set down by Lenin in his "*Left-Wing*" *Communism—an Infantile Disorder*.

On the basis of Lenin's "Report on the International Situation and the Main Tasks of the Communist International" the congress adopted theses stressing that before socialism could triumph the exploiters had to be overthrown, all the working people had to be won over to the side of the Communist parties, and the inevitable vacillations of small-scale owners in agriculture and industry, intellectuals and salaried workers, had to be neutralised.<sup>1</sup>

To carry out these tasks, the workers must have their own party consisting of the most conscientious and loyal Communists trusted by the people.

Since Communist parties had been set up in many countries, the Second Congress of the Communist International dealt largely with the Party problem. The task now was to turn Communist

<sup>1</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 185-86.



parties into mass revolutionary organisations of the working class.

As individual Western parties denied the leading part played by the Communist Party in the working people's revolutionary movement and the proletarian revolution, the congress discussed this question carefully. The theses which it adopted said in part: "Only the Communist Party, if it is really the vanguard of the revolutionary class, if it really comprises all the finest representatives of that class, if it consists of fully conscious and staunch Communists who have been educated and steeled by the experience of a persistent revolutionary struggle, and if it has succeeded in linking itself inseparably with the whole life of its class and, through it, with the whole mass of the exploited, and in completely winning the confidence of this class and this mass—only such a party is capable of leading the proletariat in a final, most ruthless and decisive struggle against all the forces of capitalism."<sup>1</sup>

The congress recognised that the struggle against both the opportunists and manifestations of the "infantile disorder" was among the main tasks facing the workers.

Bearing in mind the fact that opportunists and Centrists might manage to penetrate into the Communist International, the congress approved Lenin's conditions for admission to the organisation. These conditions provided that only parties taking a firm Marxist stand and recognising the dictatorship of the proletariat and its governmental form, the Soviets, could be accepted into the Communist International.

The parties joining the Communist Interna-

tional must be based on the principle of democratic centralism and have rigid party discipline. Moreover, they had to combine legal and illegal work, break completely with the opportunists, expose the colonial policy and support the national-liberation movement. A special stipulation said that the "programmes of all parties belonging to the Communist International must be approved by a regular congress of the Communist International or by its Executive Committee."<sup>1</sup>

The decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International became a programme document for young communist parties in their practical activities.

As the agenda was very long, the congress did not have time to deal at length with the youth movement or discuss the theses on mutual relations. These theses, prepared by the executive committees of the Communist International and the YCI, were an important step towards bringing the two organisations closer together. They were published for discussion at the congress, and stressed that the YCI supported the resolutions adopted by the Communist International and would not advance its own political programme. They also said that "reserving the right to be independent in its organisational work, the young Communist International is a part of the Communist International".

The theses defined the tasks of the young revolutionaries' international movement more clearly than the decisions of the First Congress of the YCI. They said that the YCI regarded as its main task active participation in the entire struggle for the proletarian revolution, above all in the spheres

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 187-88.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.



best suited to young people, such as "anti-militarist propaganda, anti-clerical education, the economic safeguarding of the young, and the teaching of proletarian youth".

At its second congress, the Communist International adopted its Rules in which there was a special clause on the organisational inclusion of the YCI in the Communist International. The clause said: "The International Union of Communist Youth is a fully empowered member of the Communist International and subordinated to its Executive Committee. One representative of the International Union of Communist Youth shall be delegated to the Executive Committee of the Communist International with the right of a decisive vote. The Executive Committee of the Communist International shall be entitled to delegate one representative with the right of a decisive vote to the executive organ of the International Union of Communist Youth."

The theses stressed that, together with great theoretical training, youth participation in the workers' political struggle was the main factor in educating the rising generation in a communist spirit. They also dealt at length with the relations between the Communist parties and the young communist leagues, a matter of some concern to young people at that time. The Executive Committee of the Communist International stressed that there was a great difference in the relations between youth organisations and the newly established Communist parties in some West European countries, and pointed out in the theses that this was mainly because of the different ways in which young workers' organisations arose in countries where there were still no Communist parties and where, after many years, they had

ceased to be under the petty guardianship and control of the socialist parties contaminated by reformist and conciliatory ideas. In this event the young people were quite right in demanding absolute political and organisational independence for youth organisations. However it was also the case that in certain countries where Communist parties already existed, youth organisations were still insisting on absolute independence, and were therefore confusing "their relation to the social-patriotic parties with the relation to the Communist parties". In this event youth organisations were wrong in demanding independence; they were doing harm to the common cause of the working class and were enabling the enemies of the working class to use them for their ends. In countries where Communist parties had already proved themselves to be revolutionary parties by strongly defending the interests of the working class, they and the young revolutionaries' organisations were gradually drawing closer together; moreover, this process was not one of coercion of youth organisations but of their "conviction in the need of drawing closer together and of the result of a free decision by youth leagues".

As Communist parties and young communist leagues drew closer together, the latter gradually recognised and carried out the Communist party programme while maintaining its own centralised organisation, forms and methods of agitation and propaganda, representation on central and local bodies and the right of a decisive vote. By jointly taking part in legal and illegal political activities, the Communist parties and the young communist leagues must overcome the relations between the Social-Democratic parties and the old socialist youth organisations in which



the Social-Democratic Party exercised petty guardianship and control over all the youth organisations' activities, depriving them of all initiative and preventing them from developing their independence.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International once again brought up the relations between the Communist International and the YCI. This time it stated clearly and unequivocally that "being a part of the Communist International, the Young Communist International must obey the resolutions adopted at the congress of the Communist International and the political directives of its Executive Committee, and must independently carry on its work in leading, organising, developing and consolidating the international youth movement".

The resolutions which the Executive Committee of the Communist International adopted on the vital questions of the international youth movement had a strong impact on the movement's development and helped to activate the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International in its work.

The representatives of both the Executive Committee of the YCI and foreign youth organisations who took part in the Second Congress of the Communist International and later in the sessions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, availed themselves of the opportunity of holding a conference in Moscow jointly with the representatives of the CC RYCL. The conference dealt with the question of developing the youth movement in the light of the decisions taken by the Second Congress of the Communist International and its Executive Committee.

The conference took account of the grave situation that had arisen owing to the strained relations between young workers' organisations and Communist parties, which in several countries threatened to lead to the youth organisations' open denial of the leading role of the Communist parties and the advancement of their own political programme. It addressed an appeal to the youth leagues saying that this situation did a great deal of harm to the young communist leagues and to the common cause of the working class. It said that an immediate end had to be put to the vacillation and endless disputes on tactics, and called for the prompt implementation of the decisions adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International.

The appeal ended with the words: "All possible means must be used to put an immediate end to the debates on tactics and to step up urgent organisational work, so as to enable the Communist parties and organisations to present a united front in the near future in support of Soviet Russia and world revolution."<sup>1</sup>

Among other questions, the conference discussed the venue for the Second Congress of the Young Communist International. This question became a matter of principle, since the members of the YCI still held conflicting views on the relations between the youth leagues and Communist parties.

Owing to the grave situation, the CC RYCL once again wrote to the YCI Executive Committee on November 10, 1920, emphasising the need to

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<sup>1</sup> "YCI Executive Committee's Report to the World Congress of Young Revolutionary Workers", see *Youth in Revolution* (Russ. ed.), Petrograd, 1922, p. 20.



hold the congress in Moscow. It based its argument on the fact that the representatives of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and Communist parties must take part in the work of the Second Congress of the YCI because the main item of discussion would be relations between Communist parties and young people. It also maintained that Moscow was the only place where the congress could be held legally.

However this proposal was once again rejected, and the YCI Executive Committee resolved to hold the Second Congress of the Young Communist International in the provincial German town of Jena on March 30, 1921.

The congress opened on April 3, 1921, and was represented by all communist youth leagues except the RYCL and the youth leagues in the Asian countries.

After Soviet Russia's message of greetings was read at the congress, a report was made on the international situation. The report was full of the "ultra-Left" views condemned by the Second Congress of the Communist International. The ensuing discussion on the report had to be cut short, because the police learned about the congress and its participants were threatened with immediate arrest.

It was then decided to continue the congress in Berlin. But the discussion was never wound up because on April 11, the congress presidium received a telegram from the Executive Committee of the Communist International saying that it would be most expedient to continue the congress in Moscow, where the Third Congress of the Communist International was to be held at the same time.

After a lengthy meeting between the congress presidium and the representatives of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the former proposed that the congress should be transferred to Moscow. This proposal was accepted and the congress opened in Moscow on June 15, 1921.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International had good grounds for insisting that the congress should be held in Moscow. Dangerous tendencies had been observed in the YCI's activities almost immediately after it held its first congress; these showed that, despite the decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International and several directives issued by the Central Committee of the Communist International, the Executive Committee of the YCI and its individual leagues could not tackle the task entrusted to them of ridding the youth movement of vanguardist trends and "ultra-Left" deviations. All this reduced the individual achievements of the YCI Executive Committee and its sections. The practical tasks which the Second Congress of the Communist International had worked out for the international working-class movement helped the international youth movement to rectify its mistakes. The YCI Executive Committee was given much help in improving its work by its largest and most progressive section, the Russian Young Communist League.

As a YCI section, the RYCL initiated several important activities in the international arena. It attached great importance to the development of the youth movement in the Middle and Far East. With its help, the young people of Asia held a congress in Baku on September 9 and 10, 1920, which was attended by over 100 youth represen-



tatives from Turkestan, Azerbaijan, Khiva, Bukhara, Persia, Turkey, Armenia and Georgia. As a result, the young workers' organisations in the Caucasus began to carry on vigorous activities, and mass rallies and demonstrations were held everywhere. The congress discussed the tasks facing the youth movement in the Asian countries, and brought the movement's organisations closer together. It also helped to unite the organisations in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

In late September 1920 a youth congress was held in Baku, which announced the establishment of a united Caucasian youth organisation. The congress adopted a resolution to join the RYCL.

All this went to show that no other country had such favourable conditions for organising the working-class movement, especially the youth movement, and for guiding them along the correct lines. The Russian Communist Party, which was highly experienced in guiding the workers in their revolutionary struggle and which was the leading section of the Communist International, rendered great assistance in organising the international youth movement. The course of events showed that the Young Communist International could not become an independent organisation if it were not guided politically by the Communist International and the Communist parties.

### Chapter III

#### FROM VANGUARD TO MASSES

There was a marked decline in the workers' revolutionary movement in Western Europe in late 1920 and early 1921. The first wave of mass revolutionary actions collapsed against the wall of stout resistance put up by the bourgeoisie. The new situation immediately rallied all the counter-revolutionary forces into a united front against the working class.

The reformists rendered a great service to the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. The Right-wing leaders of the socialist parties, who did their best to check the growth of the revolutionary movement in the postwar years, still exerted an influence on many workers.

The young Communist parties, which attracted the progressive and most revolutionary-minded workers into their ranks, were still very weak ideologically and organisationally. Because of their refusal to take part in the trade unions and parliaments, the Communist parties were torn away from the broad sections of the working people. In the new situation, the Communist parties had to use new tactics, and forces had to be regrouped for a new stage in the struggle. The Communist parties pinned high hopes on the coming congress of the Communist International, which was to deal with the strategy and tactics of the workers' revolutionary struggle. The com-



munist youth movement was also looking forward to the congress, because it was to settle once and for all the relations between the Communist International and the Young Communist International, between the Communist parties and communist youth organisations. Attaching great importance to this, the Executive Committee of the Communist International proposed to the central committees of the Communist parties that the delegations to the Third Congress of the Communist International should include youth representatives.

The Third Congress of the Communist International was held at a time when the increasing reactionary offensive made it impossible to think in terms of a rapid victory, and painstaking day-to-day work was necessary to prepare Communist parties for new revolutionary actions.

The congress, which began in Moscow on June 22, 1921, was attended by 57 representatives of young communist leagues. Like the largest Communist parties, the young communist delegation was given 40 votes.

The first two congresses had set up the Communist International organisationally and worked out conditions for admission. The Third Congress of the Communist International now had to decide on the general lines of its future activities. Lenin wrote: "At the Third Congress it was necessary to start practical, constructive work, to determine concretely, taking account of the practical experience of the communist struggle already begun, *exactly what* the line of further activity should be in respect of tactics and of organisation."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 520.

After carefully analysing the international situation, the congress came to the conclusion that new tactics had to be employed now that the workers' revolutionary movement had reached a new phase.

It had already been stressed at the Second Congress of the Communist International that Communist parties must consolidate relations with trade unions and set up their own groups in all the workers' mass organisations. The congress emphasised that the Communist parties would not gain mass support until they found ways of coming into contact with the masses and learned to advance slogans that corresponded to the given situation.

The debates at the Third Congress of the Communist International on the most important items on the agenda were most educative politically for the delegates of youth organisations as well. It was at the congress sessions that many delegates of the Young Communist International realised how erroneous their views were.

The report made by the Executive Committee of the Communist International at the congress said in part: "During the last year contacts have increased between the Communist International and the Young Communist International. All the efforts made by the leaders of the Socialist International to introduce a split in the communist youth movement and to tear the Young Communist International away from the Communist International by all possible means have been resolutely rebuffed"<sup>1</sup>.

The Third Congress of the Communist International stressed that if their struggle was to be

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<sup>1</sup> *Third World Congress of the Communist International*, Verbatim report (Russ. ed.), Petrograd, 1922, p. 101.



successful, the young people must join forces yet further. It also emphasised that Communist parties must guide the workers politically in their actions. To consolidate the unity of action of all revolutionary organisations, the Young Communist International must subordinate itself to the political guidance of the Communist International, while preserving its organisational independence and initiative in the solution of other questions concerning the youth movement.

In its report the Executive Committee of the Communist International stressed the need to step up work among the young people. The dissidents had failed in their attempts to start a conflict "between the young people and the Executive Committee, to set the young people at loggerheads with the Executive Committee"<sup>1</sup>.

In his special report, "The Communist International and the Communist Youth Movement" which was discussed at the congress, Willi Münzenberg dealt at length with the question of winning over young people to the side of the Communist International. He told the congress about the constant day-to-day work which the youth leagues were carrying out to replenish their ranks. The increase in the membership of the young communist leagues clearly showed that the young people were on the right road and that their class consciousness was enabling them to find a correct solution to the question of whether to join the Communist or Socialist International. Willi Münzenberg called on delegates to help those young people who had not yet found their way, and said that the Young Communist Inter-

national was awaiting assistance from the Communist parties and the Communist International. He also dealt with relations between the Young Communist International and the Communist International, between the young communist leagues and the Communist parties in the respective countries. In this connection he stressed that the Youth International had not only united the young workers who strongly condemned the betrayal by the leaders of the Second International, but had also become the centre of opposition to the Second International. It had united the revolutionary forces fighting against the world war and in several instances had played the part assigned to the Communist parties. Now that such parties had been set up and had launched a successful struggle, there was no longer any need for political guidance by the youth leagues, and they could concentrate on their own particular sphere of activity, i.e., the youth movement, and considerably reduce the scope of their activities.

Youth organisations, which had fought long for their full independence of the socialist parties, were themselves beginning to draw the conclusion that political guidance must be concentrated in the hands of the Communist International and Communist parties. This was very important. Willi Münzenberg concluded his report by stressing the growing importance of replenishing the young workers' parties, and adopting a serious attitude towards the problems facing the young people. He said that the future belonged to them, and therefore they had to be won over "so that they can continue and complete the cause of the revolution in the world at large"<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Third World Congress of the Communist International* (Russ. ed.), p. 101.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 425.



The report provoked a lively discussion, which was reflected in the Communist International's theses on the communist youth movement, adopted at the congress. The theses contained the new principles in the relations between the YCI and the Communist International, between communist youth organisations and the Communist parties. They said in part: "The relationship of the communist youth organisations to the Communist parties differs radically from the relationship of the young revolutionaries' organisations to the Social-Democratic parties. The common struggle for the proletarian revolution calls for the greatest unity and strictest centralisation. Political influence and guidance on a world scale can belong only to the Communist International and its local sections in each individual country. It is the duty of the organisations to submit to this political guidance (the programme, tactics and political directives) and to join the common revolutionary front."<sup>1</sup>

The historic decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International marked a complete break with the old views prevailing in several youth leagues and concentrated attention on the urgent task of reconstructing all the work.

The Third Congress of the Communist International was of great importance not only because it was a turning point in the general policy of the Youth International, but also because it adopted a fundamental decision on the nature and tasks of the youth movement itself. The congress worked out a programme of practical activities for the new situation, and set the sections of the Communist

International the task of preparing for new battles. Lenin wrote: "More careful, more thorough preparation for fresh and more decisive battles, both defensive and offensive—that is the fundamental and principal thing in the decisions of the Third Congress."<sup>1</sup>

The Young Communist International was to discuss these decisions at its second congress and work out new tactics for the youth movement.

### 1. Second Congress of the Young Communist International

The Second Congress of the Young Communist International held its official opening ceremony on July 9, 1921, but since the Third Congress of the Communist International was still in progress, it was decided to start the working sessions on July 14. The Second Congress of the YCI was attended by 150 delegates from 40 countries in Europe, America and the Far East who represented over 800,000 YCI members.

These figures show that an enormous amount of work had been done since the First Congress of the YCI in winning over individual youth groups and organisations, which were formerly under the socialist parties' influence, to the communist movement. In less than two years the Young Communist International grew from 14 leagues with 140,000 members to 49 leagues with 800,000 members.

The congress had the following items on its agenda: 1) report on the Third Congress of the Communist International; 2) report by the YCI

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<sup>1</sup> *Third World Congress of the Communist International*, Verbatim Report (Russ. ed.), p. 427.

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 521.



Executive Committee; 3) relations between communist youth organisations and Communist parties; 4) young people's economic struggle; 5) work in the colonial countries, and several other items.

Among those who spoke at the opening ceremony were S. A. Lozovsky, Y. M. Yaroslavsky, Clara Zetkin and A. V. Lunacharsky.

The congress dealt at great length with the YCI's general political line, the relations between the Communist parties and the young people, and the economic struggle. Resolutions were adopted on other questions without any lengthy discussion. The delegates approved the report on the results of the Third Congress of the Communist International.

Willi Münzenberg made the report on the work of the YCI Executive Committee. He mentioned the achievements of the Young Communist International during the period under review, and underlined the growing ties between the YCI and the Communist International. The Social-Democratic leaders' hopes that the young people would not follow the Communist International had been shattered.

The report said in part: "The senile Social-Democratic guardians and leaders of the young people find it most difficult to get into their narrow skulls the close militant ties which exist between the Young Communist International and the Communist International, and between the communist youth organisations and parties. But the invaluable service which the Young Communist International and the communist youth organisations have rendered to the cause of developing the proletarian revolution, now headed in all countries by the Communist International and the

parties which have joined it, lies precisely in this."<sup>1</sup>

The speaker was obliged to admit that the Executive Committee had taken wrong stand on certain questions, including autonomy and the relations between youth leagues and the Communist parties.

One of the mistakes of the YCI Executive Committee was that it had spread the reformist views existing in the Second International to the international communist youth movement. The congress discussed ways of putting an end to these old views. The Russian Young Communist League played the leading part in the struggle for purging the YCI of reformism. It was significant that the printed report by the YCI Executive Committee distributed to congress delegates was the exact opposite of the report made by Willi Münzenberg there. The Executive Committee's report presented all the YCI's activities in an unduly favourable light, which provoked some fairly strong criticism from the delegates.

The delegates considerably expanded Willi Münzenberg's self-critical speech. They cited examples showing the Executive Committee's weakness in guiding youth leagues, emphasised the Executive Committee's vacillating political line, and so on.

The speeches made by the RYCL delegates are of particular interest. In a special report to the congress, the CC RYCL stressed that youth leagues would be able to make a close study of young people's revolutionary education and guidance in the economic struggle, when they gave

<sup>1</sup> "YCI Executive Committee's Report to the World Congress of Young Revolutionary Workers", see *Youth in Revolution* (Russ. ed.), Petrograd, 1922, p. 16.



up the task of political guidance as a result of the establishment of Communist parties, and that this was the best guarantee of growing youth participation in the young people's activities.

The report dealt with the communist youth leagues' practical tasks in the light of the decisions which the Third Congress of the Communist International adopted on the settlement of the relations between the communist youth organisations and Communist parties.

A heated debate ensued when the congress began to discuss the young people's economic struggle. In another report on behalf of the Executive Committee, Willi Münzenberg analysed the economic struggle, which had become increasingly important after the war. As the economic oppression of young workers grew, communist organisations were faced with the task of setting up trade union sections for the young people and organising resistance within the trade unions against bureaucrats who tried to prevent the young people from joining in the economic struggle. The theses which the congress adopted stressed that careful preparation had to be made for the economic struggle.

Among the organisational questions, the congress concentrated mainly on the reorganisation of youth leagues at the factory level, that is, with the establishment of young communist league cells directly at the factories. In his report Eugen Schönhaar urged the immediate reorganisation of youth organisations, saying that only then could they become mass bodies. This question was not settled until the Third Congress of the YCI held in late 1922.

One of the most important questions discussed by the Second Congress of the YCI was the work

in the colonial countries. Revolutionary ideas and workers' mass protests in Western Europe and America were rapidly arousing the colonial peoples who had suffered centuries of oppression. Young people were actively promoting these new trends.

The young people in the colonies were rallying round the banner of liberating their homeland from the colonisers, establishing independent national states and rejecting religion, the opium of the people. Delegates from China, Korea, India and Persia took a very active part in the discussion of these problems at the congress.

It must be noted that apart from the Communist parties, no political party or organisation in the Socialist International attached any importance to the peoples' struggle in the colonial and dependent countries, let alone rendered them any assistance in the cause of national liberation.

The Marxist-Leninist parties and the organisations associated with them firmly set forth these tasks. The resolution adopted at the Second Congress of the YCI summarised the discussion at the congress and stressed for the first time ever in the history of the world youth movement that the Young Communist International "must endeavour to create in every colonial country a mass movement of the working-class youth, or it must endeavour to gain control over the already existing mass movements. Such mass movements may be organised either by non-party (at first economic) organisations or by the revolutionary unions of Young Communists".<sup>1</sup>

The congress elected a new Executive Commit-

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<sup>1</sup> *Resolutions and Theses of the Second Congress of the Young Communist International*, Berlin, 1921, p. 26.



tee of the YCI and increased it to 11 members and four candidates. It also resolved to transfer the headquarters of the committee to Moscow with a view to establishing closer ties with the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

The importance of the decision to transfer the headquarters of the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International from Berlin to Moscow must be emphasised. The YCI Executive Committee members were divided on this question. Its urgency was discussed at the Executive Committee of the Communist International. On June 15, 1921, one month before the Young Communist International held its second congress, YCI Executive Committee members Willi Münzenberg and Lazar Shatskin even wrote to Lenin, asking him to grant them an interview for 10 to 15 minutes on this question. The archives have no documents showing that Lenin dealt with this question, but the very fact that he was asked to solve it shows that it was of great importance to the development of the international young workers' movement.

The importance of the Second Congress of the Young Communist International lies above all in the fact that it mapped out concrete ways of developing the young people's mass movement. Its decisions summed up the results of 20 months of hard work in establishing and consolidating the young communist leagues, which had received some excellent training in party work and adopted a single political programme of struggle as their basis.

The congress completely settled the relations between the communist youth organisations and Communist parties, and recognised the need to subordinate youth organisations to the political guidance of Communist parties, which were now

consolidated ideologically and organisationally and were the true leaders of the working class. It was the congress which first raised the question of turning the communist youth organisations into mass organisations and of the need to draw more young workers into the struggle for a better future for mankind. The congress decisions clearly defined the YCI as a part of the young workers' class organisation. The congress entrusted the YCI Executive Committee with the task of consolidating ties with the youth leagues, studying the situation more carefully in individual countries and promoting the exchange of practical experience.

The congress decisions were aimed at completely breaking with the old ideology and reorganising the communist youth organisations' work. As a result of this, the congress gave a strong impetus to the youth organisations' activities.

In its review of the international young workers' movement, submitted to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the YCI Executive Committee stressed that the Second Congress of communist youth organisations had played an important part in consolidating the young revolutionaries' ranks, and had clearly defined the tasks facing the movement and its relations with the Communist parties. This was of great help to individual organisations, which, until the congress in Moscow, had not been able to devote themselves entirely to practical activities owing to endless discussions on theoretical matters.

The Second Congress of the Young Communist International opened up a new chapter in the history of the international communist youth movement.



## 2. Russian Young Communist League, 1920-1921

The Bolshevik Party faced new difficult tasks after the Soviet people had defeated the interventionists and whiteguards, and the work of restoring the economy began.

Workers and peasants were worn out by the war, hunger and devastation; the disastrous effects of the seven years of war could be overcome if all the people made a supreme effort. The Bolshevik Party pinned high hopes on the young people and the Russian Young Communist League. However, the new situation called for the elaboration of new forms and methods of work. During the Civil War everything was plain and straightforward: one knew who the enemy was and how to fight him. Now the times were just as difficult, but they no longer had the romantic aura of war. It was now necessary to show young people the new tasks facing them: to convince them that the fate of the revolution depended on economic achievements and their ability to gain knowledge and professional skills to defeat the bourgeoisie economically.

This was the situation when the RYCL held its third congress in Moscow from October 2 to 10, 1920. The main items on its agenda were the discussion and adoption of the RYCL's Programme and Rules. These items did not give rise to any basic divergences of opinion. Reports were made on the Soviet Republic's position at home and abroad, and on the Young Communist International and the young workers' political education.

Lenin made a brilliant policy speech at the congress. The delegates, most of whom had just returned from fighting in the Civil War, were full of militant fervour and thought that the leader of the



Lenin on the presidium of the First Congress of the Communist International in the Kremlin. 1919





Lenin at a session of one of the commissions of the Second Congress of the Communist International in the Kremlin, 1920

workers' party would call on them to fight the bourgeoisie. However what he said was something quite unexpected. He told them to study, work and take part in the restoration of the economy and cultural development. At first they regarded these tasks as being too prosaic and commonplace. But Lenin's speech outlining the Young Communist League's programme of activities during the construction of the communist society made a great impression on them.

In his speech Lenin pointed out that the elder generation had fulfilled the first part of the work by destroying the old, bourgeois society, and that now the young people had to erect the noble edifice of communism on the cleared ground. But before communism could be built, one had to know what it was. Communist teaching is based on a profound understanding of the laws of social development. This means that one has to acquire the sum total of human knowledge to understand modern thought. Therefore, to build a communist society, the young people must study first and foremost.

What and how to study was the burning question of the day. Lenin said that the old methods of education were unacceptable. However this did not mean that they should be totally rejected. They did have something of value, namely, the ability to convey a certain amount of knowledge, and this had to be used. If communist teaching was to become the young people's world outlook, it had to be based on the analysis of concrete facts. But this was not enough. Communism could not be taught by books alone. Young people must put their knowledge to practical use. The young people's education must be based on both theory and practice, and on the use of knowledge



gained in school as a guide to action and as a means of practical participation in socialist construction. Lenin wrote: "The Young Communist League will justify its name as the League of the young communist generation only when every step in its teaching, training and education is linked up with participation in the common struggle of all working people against the exploiters."<sup>1</sup> By this it would immediately achieve two aims: socialism would be built more rapidly, and at the same time the young would be moulded into people with a communist world outlook and morality, the people who would live under communism. Lenin stressed that there was no other way. There would never be any other human material except that remaining from the capitalist system. These people would themselves change as they transformed their country.

Lenin said that it was extremely important for every young man and woman to realise that by joining the Young Communist League they were taking on the task of helping the Communist Party to build communism. The young people must not shy away from work. They must always be in the forefront of everything new.

Lenin's speech at the Third Congress of the Russian Young Communist League provided the young people with their programme of action. As in the Civil War, the Young Communist League was the Party's loyal helpmate during these hard years for the Soviet Republic. It took on the most difficult tasks, suffering hardship with the rest of the people and passed the most challenging tests with flying colours. Among other things, the RYCL members helped to eliminate illiteracy and

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 295.

organise amateur cultural activities, stock up fuel supplies and prevent pilfering; they also helped the hungry and worked in the countryside.

In a report on the Young Communist International, Lazar Shatskin analysed the development of the international youth organisation in the year following the Berlin Congress.

The Russian Young Communist League had carried out an enormous amount of work to improve relations between the young communist leagues and the Communist parties and overcome youth syndicalism, then very widespread among youth organisations in the West.

Concluding his report, Lazar Shatskin said: "If we want our organisation to retain its influence on the international youth movement, we must always bear in mind that all the West European organisations are looking to our league for an example; if we want to remain the international youth organisation's main pivot, to be a strong force not only numerically, but also influentially, we must have, above all, theoretical clarity, purity of principles, internal solidarity and internal discipline in our own ranks."<sup>1</sup>

The Bolshevik Party blazed a trail for the people to socialism. Each time the building of socialism entered a new phase and new tasks and difficulties cropped up, the Party found new forms and methods of drawing the working masses into socialist construction.

The Young Communist League brought the Party into contact with the young workers and peasants. The Party naturally always gave prominence to matters concerning the guidance of youth organisations.

<sup>1</sup> *Third All-Russia Congress of the RYCL*, Verbatim report (Russ. ed.), Moscow-Leningrad, 1926, p. 81.



In its circular letter of July 1920, the CC RCP(B) said that Party organisations' guidance of the RYCL committees "must concern the main lines of work, the main content of agitation and propaganda, and must eliminate the main shortcomings, thus giving free reign to the initiative of the rising generation of Communists".<sup>1</sup>

Concerned about the training of the RYCL organisations' leaders, the CC RCP(B) emphasised the need to set up sections in all Party schools for carrying on work among the young people and to attract young people into these schools through the RYCL organisations; it also recognised the RYCL provincial committees' right to retain for their work not more than 25 per cent of those who had completed an educational course. "Helping the league," said the circular, "ultimately means helping the entire Party."

The Bolshevik Party saw to it that RYCL members took a correct stand and did not divorce the organisation from the broad sections of the young working people or drive a wedge between the RYCL organisations and the Bolshevik Party organisations.

However the possibility of such mistakes could not be precluded because it was extremely difficult to carry on work in a multi-structural economy. The prevalence of petty-bourgeois elements in the country threatened the RYCL with falling into petty-bourgeois anarchy. In their efforts to protect organisations from this danger, RYCL members occasionally went to the opposite extreme by divorcing themselves from the broad mass of the young working people.

In mid-1919 RYCL members in several orga-

nisations began to form a narrow circle and set up various obstacles to prevent new members from joining the league. As a result, these organisations lost touch completely with the young people and ceased to influence them. The CC RYCL sent letters to all organisations, saying that the RYCL was a mass organisation and, as such, must be open to the workers and semi-proletarians of the town and countryside.

To prevent the league from being overrun with petty-bourgeois elements, the local organisations could stipulate conditions for the admission of students, Soviet office workers and other intellectuals into the league, for instance, that they should obtain recommendations from members of the RCP(B) and RYCL, do work among the young people for a definite length of time before entry into the league, and so on.

In 1919 and 1920 several responsible RYCL workers, including Vladimir Dunayevsky, tried to impose an erroneous viewpoint on the league concerning its nature, tasks and relations with the Party and the working class. Maintaining that the league could never be a mass organisation, they proposed to set up along with the Russian Young Communist League, whose function was to unite the young Communists and to carry out political work among the young people, such mass youth organisations as the Young Workers' Councils and sections under the trade unions for defending the young working people's economic rights.

Vladimir Dynayevsky expressed his views on the forms of the young workers' mass association in the *Yuny Kommunist* (Young Communist) magazine, an organ of the CC RYCL, and also at a meeting of the Moscow Council of Trade

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, July 27, 1920.



Unions. Basically this was an attempt to set the young workers against the proletariat, and the youth organisations against the Bolshevik Party. Instead of setting the working class against the bourgeois class, he set young workers against the adult workers, and thus distorted the very principle of the class struggle.

Most RYCL members, however, did not support this expression of "youth syndicalism". Lazar Shatskin, a member of the Central Committee, set forth the CC RYCL's viewpoint in an article for the *Yuny Kommunist*, saying that since it was the workers and not the bourgeoisie who held the reins of power in Soviet Russia, the young workers carried out their economic tasks in conjunction with the state. Young people could be successfully drawn into socialist construction only if the Young Communist League used all forms of work—political, cultural, educational and economic. There would be a dispersion of forces if these forms were split up according to various organisations.

This question was so pressing and so difficult that it was the subject of a special discussion at the CC RYCL's enlarged meetings with local organisations from April 26 to 28, and July 15 to 17, 1919, and later at the Second Congress of the RYCL.

Vladimir Dunayevsky's views were rejected. An absolute majority of league members opposed the establishment of special mass youth organisations, which went to show that the line pursued by the Central Committee was correct.

Emphasising the need to render the Russian Young Communist League practical assistance, the CC RCP(B) set forth several measures for consolidating youth organisations in its letter "The

RYCL and Its Work". The main proposals in this letter were later incorporated into the resolution adopted by the Tenth Congress of the RCP(B).

In the period of the New Economic Policy<sup>1</sup>, when the struggle against the bourgeoisie assumed more intense but indirect forms, the Bolshevik Party again raised the question of consolidating the Russian Young Communist League, which linked the Party with the young working people. To attract more RYCL members into Party work, the Tenth Congress of the RCP(B) adopted a resolution "On Party Construction", in which it charged all Party members up to the age of 20 to be members of the RYCL and to take an active part in its work. The congress stressed that the "Party committees' representatives on RYCL committees must take part in the ideological guidance of and must be up-to-date with all the league's work". The Party committees undertook to help the RYCL improve its members' political education and to draw young people into Soviet and economic construction.

To improve the composition of the RYCL's leadership, the congress recommended that some of them should be replaced by Party workers.

The congress adopted a decision which made it incumbent on RYCL members who were also members of the Bolshevik Party to be constantly active in Party work, and at the same time recommended that the Russian Young Communist League should take part in the discussion of general political questions and the problems of Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> An economic policy pursued by the Soviet state during the transition from capitalism to socialism. It was directed at consolidating the alliance between the workers and peasants, eliminating the exploiter classes and establishing the economic basis of socialism.—Ed.



and Party construction by means of RYCL participation in Party organisations' open general meetings and RYCL representation in an advisory capacity at Party delegates' meetings, conferences and congresses. This decision was an extremely important step in raising the RYCL members' political awareness and helped the Party organisations to direct the young people's vigour and initiative towards the solution of the most important problems of socialist construction.

In its letter to local organisations "On the Popularity of the New Economic Policy Among the Young People", the CC RYCL said in part: "At the present moment there is a certain vacillation and misunderstanding of the New Economic Policy in the league. This is only natural in the case of young workers who have not had a thorough Marxist schooling." In reporting that the RYCL had already embarked on the huge task of adapting to new conditions, the Central Committee stressed that the league organisations' duty was, on the one hand, to defend the young workers' economic interests, and on the other, to inculcate in young people a "responsible attitude towards their duties, to teach them to be thrifty, practical and scrupulous in all their day-to-day work".

The CCRCP(B) and the CC RYCL adopted a joint resolution "On the Week of Rapprochement Between the RCP and the RYCL" on November 2, 1921. The CCRCP(B) also addressed a letter to league members, in which it set forth the principles of the relations between the Bolshevik Party and the RYCL and explained the reasons for pursuing the New Economic Policy and the tasks facing the Bolshevik Party at the new difficult stage of socialist construction. The CC RCP(B) called on young people to train competent and

devoted Communists and to establish close permanent working ties between the RYCL and RCP(B) organisations.

At its 11th Congress, the RCP(B) dealt at great length with the youth leagues' work. A report was made on the RYCL's state of affairs, and the congress adopted a resolution "On the Question of the RYCL", which stressed the part played by the youth leagues in socialist construction.

In its resolution the congress emphasised that the maintenance of young workers at the factories and their protection from extreme exploitation were a prerequisite of the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and industrial development. To achieve this, the trade unions and state bodies had to reserve the required number of young workers at the factories, see to it that all the labour protection rules were observed, and set up a new school with the RYCL's active assistance, combining practical training with theoretical education.

As the young workers' economic position deteriorated and petty-bourgeois elements began to exert growing influence on them, the young people showed less and less interest in the country's socio-political life. In its fight against the counter-revolutionary organisations which were trying to win over the young workers, the RYCL had to carry on intensive cultural work to counteract this subversive influence.

Analysing the drop in RYCL membership, the congress pointed out that along with the sacking of young people at factories and military mobilisation which had weakened the league, its ranks had thinned largely because it was unable to meet the young people's demands. As the league weakened, it was less able to adapt to new conditions.



It should be noted that the CC RCP(B) attached great importance to the RYCL's activities and, as we have seen earlier, often asked local Party organisations to render the RYCL practical assistance. However due to the pressure of everyday work, many local Party organisations did not give sufficient attention to young people, thus showing that they underestimated the importance of this sphere of activity.

Among the most important practical tasks which the congress formulated for the league were: to attract a larger number of workers into it, to raise the age limit by admitting young progressive workers into it, and the development of its members' class awareness in the process of practical, economic and cultural work.

The congress resolution clearly formulated the Party's tasks with respect to the league and stressed the importance of guiding the league ideologically in its work, carefully selecting Party representatives for the league committees, providing the league with all the requisites for developing educational work, and drawing RYCL members into Party work.

With the aim of providing the Party with reliable new members capable of carrying on the great work started by the elder generations, the CC RCP(B) approved the "Provision on the Admission of RYCL members into the RCP(B)" on June 22, 1922. This consolidated ties between the Party and the young workers still further, and the Party began to exert stronger influence on the young people.

The RYCL had all the valuable experience which the Bolsheviks gained over the decades at its disposal. It was equipped with the theory worked out by the Party, and was constantly guided

by Lenin's advice and instructions. It was only by becoming well acquainted with the Bolshevik Party's principles of the youth movement that the RYCL could carry out its work correctly. The league soon became a powerful mass organisation. Its membership increased by more than twenty times between the First All-Russia Congress of the RYCL and the autumn of 1920.

I have dealt with the history of the youth movement in Soviet Russia at such length because it is a very important component of the history of the world communist movement. The young people in other countries took a keen interest in the life and work of their counterparts in Soviet Russia.

This was reflected in the young people's movement in the capitalist countries for the defence of the Soviet state.

At the same time the young Soviet people's struggle and the privations which they suffered as a result of it left a mark on the world youth movement.

The ideological opponents of socialism, including the social-reformists, made wide use of the difficulties in building socialism—difficulties caused mainly by capitalist encirclement and imperialist obstruction.

Although they tried hard to disorientate the young workers at large, the enemies of socialism could not prevent them from growing increasingly sympathetic to the Soviet state and the courageous young Soviet people. This was clearly borne out by the young people's struggle in the capitalist countries. Despite varying conditions, all countries have many common features as regards the world youth movement: the struggle against social-reformism in the young workers' move-



ment, the increasing role played by the Communist parties and the world revolutionary outlook, and actions in the defence of the Soviet state.

### 3. YCI Executive Committee's Implementation of the Decisions

#### Adopted by the Second Congress of the YCI

After the Second Congress of the Young Communist International, all the YCI sections began to implement the congress decisions on the most important aspects of the international youth movement.

The new Executive Committee which the Second Congress of the YCI elected was more efficient than the old one. The mere fact that its headquarters had been transferred to Moscow greatly enhanced its prestige. Close ties were established between its members and the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

The under-secretariats which were set up for the various groups of countries rendered great assistance to the YCI Executive Committee. They consisted of the Berlin Under-secretariat (for the West European countries), the Vienna Under-secretariat (for Austria, Hungary and the Balkan countries), the Far East Under-secretariat (with its centre in Irkutsk) and the Middle East Under-secretariat (with its centre in Tashkent).

Some members and candidate-members of the Executive Committee were sent to individual countries as permanent or temporary representatives. As a result, many important practical questions concerning the international youth movement were solved efficiently and well.

The decisions which the congress adopted with a view to improving and consolidating the com-

munist youth organisations had a mixed reception. Some leagues accepted them as a guide to practical action, while in others great differences arose and caused lengthy debates. In both cases great obstacles had to be overcome before the decisions could be implemented. Lack of experience in revolutionary work and the grave political situation in several countries were the main obstacles.

On the other hand, the congress decisions on the relations between the Communist parties and the communist youth organisations, which, as we have seen, was the most pressing question at the congress, were put into effect in a relatively short space of time by most youth organisations. Their implementation was strongly opposed in two countries only, Germany and Norway.

The YCI Executive Committee had many organisational shortcomings. This was particularly true of the period between the first and second youth congresses. However these shortcomings did not pose any grave danger, and it was only a matter of time before they were eliminated. The vanguardist feelings which many leaders of the international youth movement inherited from the Youth International turned out to be more of a problem. Vanguardist theories became widespread in the West European countries owing to the communist youth movement's "infantile disorder", the theoretical weakness and inadequate training of the youth movement's leaders, their hatred of opportunism, the opportunistic degeneration of Social-Democratic parties in the West, the weakness of the Left-wing groups and their inability to lead the youth movement, and the Left-wing elements' overestimation of the maturity of the revolutionary situation. The Left-wing groups in



the West, including revolutionary youth organisations, did not have a clear understanding of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine concerning the new type of party, the workers' militant and revolutionary party.

The influence of vanguardist theories was gradually overcome as the communist youth organisations gained revolutionary experience, as Leninism became widespread in the West European countries, and above all as the Left-wing elements gained a true understanding of Marxist-Leninist teaching concerning the party.

During the First World War the revolutionary youth organisations started a determined struggle against socialist party leaders who had betrayed the interests of the working class. The socialist parties' Left wing, the workers' most progressive section, sympathised and supported the young people in this struggle. Under difficult wartime conditions youth organisations carried out an enormous amount of work to unite the revolutionary factors in their ranks and won high prestige among the workers. The young people of Western Europe fought courageously in the revolutionary uprisings which were triggered off by the Great October Socialist Revolution. Youth organisations were among the first to announce that they were joining the Communist International, and did a great deal to spread the ideas of the Third International and set up Communist parties in their countries. In Spain and Belgium Communist parties were set up on the basis of youth organisations.

Although Communist parties were set up in several countries, communist youth organisations continued to adhere to their own political programme for some time to come, using adult forms

and methods of work, because these parties were weak organisationally. The development of the working-class movement urgently demanded joint efforts by all the workers' organisations, action according to a single political programme, and a single centre of political guidance. It was only the Communist parties, equipped with Marxist theory, which could become the true leaders.

Most members of the communist youth organisations realised that the youth organisations had to be reorganised in the new situation and that they must renounce their own political programme, because the young people and the adult workers needed a common programme of action. However there were some youth leaders who called for their organisations' autonomy and for the establishment of relations as equal organisations, saying that the young people were the workers' vanguard. They maintained that this was necessary since the socialist parties had previously brought the youth movement under their control. Unfortunately, these ideas were supported by some members of the YCI Executive Committee, elected at the YCI's First Congress.

The relations between the Communist parties and the youth leagues, between the Communist International and the YCI, became the stumbling-block to unity of action by all the contingents of the working class. We have already quoted typical vanguardist statements in the *Youth International* magazine. The theory of vanguardism probably saw its heyday on the eve of the Second Congress of the YCI, when the Executive Committee said in its report to the congress: "That which millions of people are expecting of the Communist International is being realised in the Young Communist International."



It should be noted that certain leaders of the working-class movement supported the young people in their vanguardism for some time. These leaders soon betrayed the cause of the working class. In their efforts to win over the young people, they called them the "vanguard's vanguard", the "party's barometer", and so on.

Vanguardism was very widespread in the West European countries. Individual manifestations of it were also observed in the RYCL, some of whose leaders demanded the Young Workers' Councils and youth sections under the trade unions should be set up, and even that the RYCL should be turned into the Young Communist Party. These views met with little support, although the RYCL's central organ, the *Yuny Kommunist* magazine, did carry several controversial articles.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International carried out an enormous amount of work to rectify these mistakes and eliminate vanguardist sentiments by careful explanation. Although the Second Congress of the YCI in the main rejected the theory of vanguardism when it discussed relations between Communist parties and communist youth organisations, some manifestations of vanguardism were observed in the YCI's activities for some years to come.

The economic questions which the Second Congress of the YCI brought up were solved when communist youth organisations consolidated their ties with the masses and began to take an active part in trade union work.

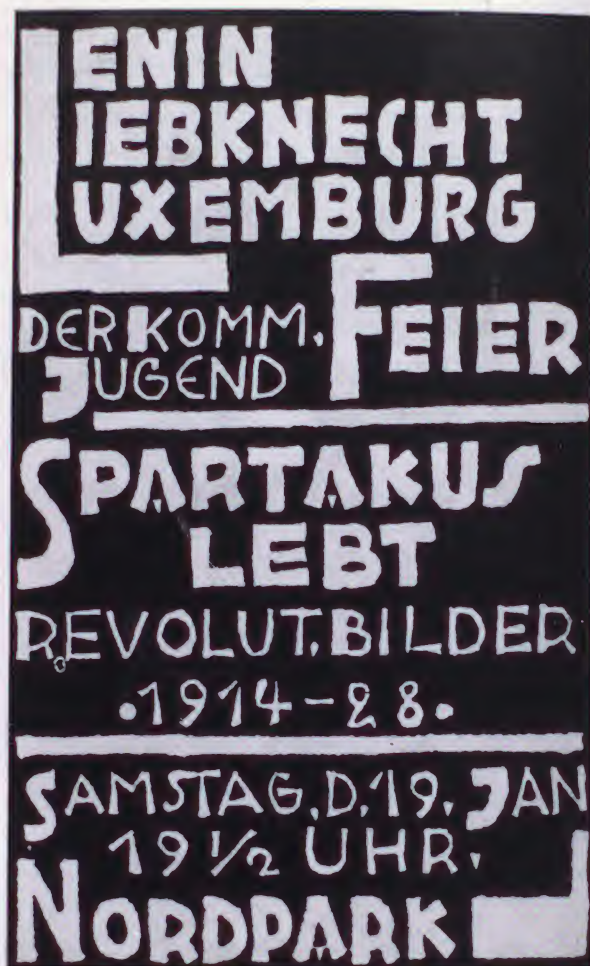
In implementing the decisions adopted at the congress, the YCI Executive Committee strengthened international ties with the YCI sections considerably and carried out several organisational measures to consolidate these sections.

*Til den arbeidende ungdom i alle land.*



Cover of the Appeal by the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International to the young working people of all countries, published by the Young Communist League of Norway. 1927





Pamphlet put out by the Young Communist League of Germany during the Lenin-Liebknecht-Luxemburg campaign. 1928

The Executive Committee began to hold regular meetings. It met 66 times in the eight months following the Second Congress of the YCI in early July 1921. It also attached great importance to united front tactics.

Like the Communist International, the YCI was faced with the task of mobilising the broad mass of the working people to carry out its day-to-day activities. One of the most important tasks was still to free the masses from reformism's influence and to win them over to the communist movement.

The purpose of united front tactics was above all to expose the reformist leaders as bourgeois agents and traitors to the working class. This became a pressing problem for a number of reasons, some of which are mentioned here. Along with the world revolutionary youth's powerful contingent, which took an active part in the workers' revolutionary actions, there were also many other youth organisations, which supported the socialist parties and the international social-reformist centre. The Right wing exerted influence on some young socialists, and the Centrists on others. The differences that arose between the Right wing and the Centrists in the political parties caused corresponding clashes among the young people.

Socialist youth organisations were at first relatively small, and it was not the best young socialists that they attracted into their ranks. In 1920 they began to grow numerically as they stepped up their activities. With the active support of the social-chauvinists, they embarked on the gigantic task of uniting the remains of the socialist leagues which did not join the communist organisations and the Young Communist International.



Being under the social-reformist parties' guidance, the socialist youth organisations did not have much influence on the young workers, and in mid-1921 they had only about 120,000 members. However the very fact of their existence did great harm to the working-class cause; they undermined the unity of the working class and drew many young workers away from the political struggle. It should be noted that the socialist youth organisations' ranks themselves were disunited. These youth organisations were at first united by the Young Socialist International (YSI), which was established immediately after the socialist parties held their first international conference in Berne in 1919. Somewhat later, however, there was a split in the YSI, which was a repetition of the developments at the London or the so-called Berne International.

Immediately after the Centrist parties held a conference in Vienna which resulted in the establishment of the so-called Two-and-a-Half International, the socialist youth leagues held their conference in the same town on the initiative of the Austrian and French organisations on February 28, 1921. The only organisations that agreed to take part in the conference were those which had fallen under the influence of the Centrist parties, most of which were hostile to the Communist International's platform.

The Young Communist League of Germany, however, also accepted the invitation to take part in the conference, in order to expose the treacherous policy pursued by the Centrists and the newly established Two-and-a-Half International.

The German YCL was fully aware of the danger posed by the establishment of a third international youth organisation. For this reason its

delegates proposed a resolution saying that the socialist youth organisations which were represented at the conference should join the Young Communist International. The resolution was actually adopted, but it ran counter to the principles which had inspired the holding of the conference. The conference organisers, who included Friedrich Adler, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, had hitherto concealed their real sentiments by talk about their impartiality towards the political trends in the national and international youth movement, but now they were forced to show their true colours. They managed to manipulate the conference's work by first sending away the German YCL delegation. Following the example of the International Workers' Association of Socialist Parties, the conference set up the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations, which consisted of the Social-Democratic youth organisations in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Latvia and Yugoslavia, and the socialist youth organisations in Germany and France. Leopold Thaller (Austria) was elected chairman of its Executive Committee.

The conference approved the association's new Rules and Programme, which were a copy of those of the Two-and-a-Half International. The YSI was in a difficult position since most young people were united by the Young Communist International and others by the Centrist International. The trade unions' reformist leaders, who headed the so-called Amsterdam International, then came to its aid. On their initiative, the Young Workers' International was set up; preparations for its establishment were started as early as 1920 by representatives of socialist organisations in Denmark, Sweden and Germany.



Together with representatives of the Belgian and French organisations, they held a meeting in Hamburg in January, 1921, at which it was decided to hold an international congress of young workers' organisations.

The Young Workers' International held its Constituent Congress in Amsterdam from May 12 to 13, 1921. It was represented by the leagues of the Social-Democratic youth organisations in Germany, Belgium and Holland and by small groups in Sweden, Denmark and France. The congress adopted a manifesto to the young workers and the Programme and Rules of the Young Workers' International. Berlin became the permanent headquarters of the Bureau of the Young Workers' International, and P. Voogd, leader of the organisation in Holland, was elected its secretary.

The Young Workers' International had a small membership. It had about 30,000 members in mid-1921, over 50 per cent of whom represented the Young Workers' League of Germany, which held the key positions in this international association. Like the leagues in other countries that belonged to the Young Workers' International, the Young Workers' League of Germany carried on mainly cultural and educational work.

The league's members took no part in the workers' revolutionary actions, for they hoped to improve their position by legislative measures alone. Never before had the youth front been so disunited, and its forces so scattered, as in mid-1921.

Realising that the organisations had to be brought together to form a single international organisation, the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International tried hard to secure the concerted action of the young workers at large.

On July 26, 1921, the YCI Executive Committee sent a letter to the International Workers' Association of Socialist Youth Organisations in Vienna saying that the ranks of the working class had to be firmly united if the struggle was to be successful, and that the steps taken by the YCI were intended to defend the young workers and support their struggle against capital's mounting offensive. It read in part: "As the largest international association of young workers, the Young Communist International feels bound in the interests of the hundreds of thousands of its members and the millions of young working people in general to convene an international congress of all the young workers' organisations."

At the same time the YCI Executive Committee sent a letter to the Young Workers' International in Berlin, where it proposed to hold a world congress of young workers and dwelt at length on the questions which it believed had to be solved at the congress.

The YCI Executive Committee proposed that the following questions be discussed: 1) the situation of the young workers suffering under capital's mounting offensive; 2) the advancing of common demands by the young working people of the world; 3) the establishment of a united front with the adult workers.

The letter concluded by saying: "The experience gained by your German section's numerous local groups in the joint actions with the communist youth organisations in the defence of the young workers' urgent demands must once and for all convince you that such co-operation is possible in the struggle."

The socialist youth organisations' leaders ignored the YCI Executive Committee's proposal.



As for the Executive Committee of the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations, it acknowledged receipt of the letter and promised to discuss it in the near future.

However it soon became obvious that the Young Workers' International and the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations were delaying the holding of a world congress of young workers' organisations to conceal their attempts to rally their forces and ward off the attacks made by rank-and-file members supporting a united front.

Although the YCI Executive Committee did not succeed in uniting all the young workers' leagues, its actions had a strong impact on the young workers. Communist youth organisations stepped up their activities as fresh forces entered their ranks.

An entirely different situation was observed in the socialist youth organisations. William Foster wrote: "The YCI cultivated international and national youth organisation, a breadth of programme, a united front spirit, and an intense political militancy that were all quite unknown in the weak, anemic, skeleton youth organisations of the Second International."<sup>1</sup>

The refusal by the Executive Committee of the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations and the Young Workers' International to join forces with the communist youth organisations was used by the YCI to mount a broad campaign among the rank-and-file members of these organisations. The ranks of the communist youth organisations at large swelled as the YCI carried on vigorous action in this sphere.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals*, New York, 1955, p. 468.

The YCI Executive Committee rendered an enormous amount of assistance to Soviet Russia, where some of the country's largest grain-producing regions were suffering from drought in 1921 and hundreds of thousands of people had no food. The Executive Committee of the Communist International called on the entire world to help Soviet Russia. This appeal received a warm response from millions of working people, and a world-wide campaign was launched to help Soviet Russia.

The YCI Executive Committee called on the young workers and peasants to take an active part in collecting for the relief fund. Its appeal said: "Forward towards the active work of rendering proletarian assistance to Soviet Russia. The young workers, who zealously helped the workers in wartime to fight against the war, now have to be the staunch fighters against hunger."<sup>1</sup>

The YCI Executive Committee's appeal was supported by all the Young Communist International's sections. At the time the young people regarded assistance to Soviet Russia as their main task.

The Help-the-Hungry movement was conducted on an especially large scale among youth organisations in Germany. Funds were collected throughout the country for a children's home in the hunger-stricken Volga area. When the home, named after Karl Liebknecht, was built, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany passed a resolution obliging its members to make a special monthly contribution for the maintenance of the home. In its letter to the

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<sup>1</sup> *International Youth Correspondence* (Russ. ed.), 1921, No. 1, p. 16.



RYCL, the Young Communist League of Germany said: "We hope that the Liebknecht Children's Home will be a lasting memorial to the young German communists' solidarity with the Russian workers and peasants."<sup>1</sup>

The young people's active participation in the movement to help the starving in Soviet Russia demonstrated the young revolutionaries' proletarian internationalism.

The YCI Executive Committee attached great importance to the development of the youth movement in the colonial and dependent countries, where youth organisations were just beginning to be set up.

Prominence was given to the countries of the Far East, where the young revolutionaries' organisations could develop on a sound basis. The YCI's Far Eastern Secretariat took the initiative in proposing that a congress of the youth organisations of China, Korea, Japan and Mongolia be held simultaneously with the scheduled congress of the peoples of the Far East.

In its appeal to the young people in China, Japan, Korea and Mongolia, the YCI's Far Eastern Secretariat said: "Young Comrades! Protest against the international imperialists' gross violence and tyranny, expose the predatory nature of the Washington conference, hold meetings and rallies for this end and start to agitate on a large scale for a congress of the peoples of the Far East. Elect your organisations' representatives to this congress. From among the youth organisations' delegates to the congress of the peoples of the Far East, a congress of the young revolutionaries of the Far East will also be held to discuss their problems."

It was decided to hold the Far Eastern youth conference in Moscow in January 1922. About 50 per cent of the delegates represented youth organisations in China, Korea, Japan and Mongolia, which by this time had over 140,000 members. The congress was attended by about 60 delegates.

The young Far Eastern revolutionaries' congress, held immediately after that of the peoples of the Far East, had a strong impact on the establishment of new and the consolidation of already existing young revolutionaries' organisations in the colonial countries. It took account of the specific conditions in these countries and analysed the problems and methods of work there. Their actual stay in Soviet Russia, the friendly talks, the opportunity to find out about RYCL work, and the trip to Petrograd made a great impression on the delegates.

At the congress the delegates enthusiastically adopted an appeal to young revolutionaries in China, Korea, Japan and Mongolia, which said: "Comrades! Brothers! The representatives of the working youth in Korea, China, Japan and Mongolia have come together in the Red capital of Soviet Russia, the country where power is concentrated in the hands of the workers and peasants. They have come to Moscow to attend the young revolutionaries' Far Eastern congress with a view to discussing together their grave position and mapping out the immediate tasks in their struggle. This congress appeals to you to consider carefully your fate and to understand what every one of you has to do to become free of poverty and oppression."

The celebration of the Karl Liebknecht and

<sup>1</sup> *International Youth Correspondence*, No. 4-8, p. 69.



Rosa Luxemburg Memorial Day<sup>1</sup> played an important part to consolidate the young people's internationalism and international solidarity. The young people at large staged mass demonstrations on January 15 in keeping with a decision adopted by the Second Congress of the YCI. They were well organised owing to the YCI Executive Committee's efforts. The young people's activities were particularly widespread in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Germany, Soviet Russia and several Balkan countries. Thousands of leaflets were circulated, special newspaper and magazine issues were put out, and rallies and demonstrations were organised; as a result thousands of people joined the communist youth leagues in various countries. These demonstrations by young people, organised under the slogans of "For Soviet Russia!", "For the Communist International!" and "For the Proletarian Revolution!", encouraged a spirit of internationalism among the young workers and met with the support of the workers at large.

As part of its activities to consolidate yet further the international ties between the young workers and to implant the spirit of internationalism in youth organisations, the YCI Executive Committee continued the wartime practice of celebrating International Youth Day. This day, the first Sunday of every September, became the young revolutionaries' show of strength. During the war it was celebrated with anti-war slogans, and after the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia

<sup>1</sup> The Right-wing Social-Democrats, supported by the military clique, brutally murdered the Communist Party leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg on January 15, 1919, after the workers' uprising was suppressed in Berlin.—*Ed.*

with slogans calling for the defence of Soviet Russia, for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in all countries and for a world revolution.

In 1921, after the Second Congress of the YCI, International Youth Day was celebrated on an especially wide scale, with slogans urging the implementation of the congress decisions on the establishment of a mass organisation and preparations for the workers' struggle.

The YCI successfully carried on various activities. These activities yielded results, which were reflected in the growth and consolidation of the ranks of the young Communists' national organisations, as can be seen from a few examples from the history of individual organisations, starting with the Young Communist League of Germany (YCLG). In keeping with the decisions adopted at the Second Congress of the YCI, the CC YCLG did an enormous amount of work to ensure the young German people's unity of action.

There was a rapid delimitation of forces in the Free Socialist Youth organisations after the congress in Weimar, which marked a turn towards a rapprochement with the Communist Party. With the help of the Independent Social-Democratic Party, a group of young people who were opposed to the Free Socialist Youth League held their own congress in Halle from December 14 to 16, 1919, where they proclaimed the establishment of the Young Socialist Workers' League. For almost a year this league was still part of the Free Socialist Youth organisation. The Independent Social-Democratic Party drew many young workers to its side by its slogans calling for the youth organisations' neutrality and complete independence.



Controversial points in the Free Socialist Youth League's programme were explained, and the work in the trade unions and relations with the parties were discussed, throughout almost the whole of 1920. The developments in Central Germany in March 1920 strongly furthered the delimitation of forces both in the Communist Party and in the Free Socialist Youth League. The young people's participation in the general strike and armed clashes, the establishment of workers' security squads, the distribution of leaflets, and so on, promoted the young people's activities and aggravated the contradictions in their ranks.

As differences on fundamental political questions continued to exist in the Free Socialist Youth League, its leaders were compelled to hold a national conference. It was held in Berlin on May 9 and 10, 1920, and showed clearly that a total split in the youth movement could not be averted.

The question of relations with the party, which gave rise to marked differences at the conference, was dealt with further at local conferences, where several organisations called for an end to the ceaseless disputes and for a final settlement of the relations with the Communist Party and the Communist International.

The opposition, which supported the Independent Social-Democratic Party's platform, began to openly advocate a complete break with the communist movement and withdrawal from the Free Socialist Youth League; in several areas it seized control of the local organisations.

The Central Committee of the Free Socialist Youth League held a meeting on September 11 and 12, 1920, at which it discussed the existing

situation and adopted a decision which made the split official.

To solve the problems which it faced after the delimitation of the opposition, the Free Socialist Youth League held a national congress in Berlin on December 28, 1920, at which it soberly assessed its strength in the youth movement and outlined immediate tasks. It was then that the slogan of "winning over the masses" was first advanced. The most important congress decision was on the recognition of the need for close unity with the Communist Party.

The Young Communist League of Germany, whose ranks thinned somewhat after the split with the opposition, managed in a short space of time to consolidate ties with the local organisations and to unite its ranks. By early 1921 it already had 824 local groups in 25 districts with 27,882 members. Its central organ's circulation increased to 30,000. The league became one of the largest organisations in the Young Communist International and exerted a strong influence on the international youth movement.

The league carried out an enormous amount of work to consolidate solidarity with Soviet Russia. In March 1921 the CC YCLG issued an appeal to the young workers of all countries, in which it strongly supported the establishment of relations with the Soviet Union and the consolidation of workers' unity. It ended with these words: "We demand economic relations with Soviet Russia. We want to fight side by side with our Russian brothers in the East. We call for an alliance with Soviet Russia. Young German workers, that is the banner under which you should wage the joint struggle with your elder comrades in labour!"

The league held a two-day congress in Halle



on September 10-11, 1921. It was the most representative congress ever to be held by the league since it was set up. The congress was attended by 349 delegates and many guests from Switzerland, Austria, Italy, America, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France and Luxemburg. Its agenda included the following items: 1) political situation; 2) report on the Young Communist International's world congress; 3) Central Bureau's report; 4) relations between communist youth organisations and Communist parties; 5) the economic struggle and the young Communists' activities in the trade unions.

In its address to the congress, the YCI Executive Committee said that the Young Communist League of Germany was faced with the "task, as emphasised by the Second Congress of the Young Communist International, of bringing together and organising the young workers and educating them in a communist spirit on the basis of their active participation in the revolutionary struggle and educational work and of the transformation of small narrow communist youth organisations into mass organisations that will embrace hundreds of thousands of young workers, attract new broad sections of young people as yet indifferent to communism and prepare them for the impending battle".<sup>1</sup>

The congress dealt at great length with the economic struggle and youth participation in trade union work. These questions were brought up because the young workers' situation was steadily deteriorating in Germany, whose defeat in the war brought severe hardship to the German working people alone.

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<sup>1</sup> *Youth International* (Russ. ed.), No. 1-3, 1921, p. 47.

In this connection the congress adopted a resolution which clearly showed the young workers' intolerable working conditions. It said that they suffered from a "disproportionately long working day, remuneration which beggars all description, and corporal punishment" and that "beginners were employed in both household chores and in the sphere of mechanised mass production".

The congress decisions reflected all the most important resolutions adopted by the Communist International and the Second Congress of the YCI.

A resolution adopted at the congress also said: "The trade unions are the working class's bodies for improving its economic position. For their part, the young workers are a component of the working class, since they will succeed in their economic struggle only with the adults' help. Therefore, the young working people, each of them individually, must become organised in the free trade unions."

To reach this decision, the German communist youth organisation had to overcome resistance within its ranks and show the opposition the need for trade union work. The decisions adopted at the congress helped to turn the league into a mass organisation and played an important part in drawing new members into it from the German socialist youth organisation.

However the German communist youth organisation faced certain difficulties owing to the existence of several young workers' organisations which were in the Young Workers' International, the Young Socialist Workers, and the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations. Moreover, there were several large bourgeois youth organisations in Germany, including the German



Young National League, the Young People of the German People's Party, and Young Germany, which were the tools of counter-revolution. Almost 20 per cent of the young German population belonged to bourgeois youth organisations. Such were the conditions under which the young German people's communist contingent carried on its work. Confident in the victorious outcome of the workers' struggle and devoted to the cause of the revolution, young German Communists wrote a letter of greetings to Lenin, the working people's leader, saying: "Confident that our slow but steady successes will serve the great aim which you have taught us, we promise to increase by tenfold our vigour and our will on the road to victory through struggle."

Having overcome all the difficulties, confusion and vacillation, the Young Communist League of Germany took the true road of struggle and trained hundreds of loyal sons of the people to continue Karl Liebknecht's cause.

The historic decisions which the Second Congress of the YCI adopted and the measures taken by the YCI had an impact on youth organisations in other countries as well.

In *France* the young revolutionaries waged a determined struggle to win recognition of the YCI, expose the social-reformists, and unite their ranks. The revolutionary-minded members of the French National Federation of Young Socialists proclaimed the youth movement programme and began to popularise it in youth organisations. These activities yielded results, which were first reflected in the establishment of the Committee of Struggle for the Autonomy of Youth Organisations and Affiliation to the Third International.

The committee began to prepare vigorously for

a French youth conference; it issued several appeals to the young people, in which it denounced the federation's reformist leaders and those supporting affiliation to the Workers' Socialist International, as opportunists in the working-class movement.

The socialist youth organisation held its national congress in Troyes on April 4 and 5, 1920, at which it discussed youth organisations' autonomy and their relations with the Young Communist International. Until the congress in Troyes, youth groups which sympathised with the Communist International had existed on an autonomous basis without joining the French National Federation of Young Socialists. Owing to various circumstances, the Centrists gained the upper hand at the congress under cover of pseudo-revolutionary talk. Although they were obliged to give in under pressure from the federation's revolutionary minority and agree to join the Young Communist International, they advanced preliminary conditions which were quite unacceptable to the Young Communist International. These conditions boiled down to a demand to recognise the federation's complete freedom of action in organisational matters and to hold the second international youth congress immediately, which was to be attended by all the organisations that were in the Youth International before the outbreak of the war and had expressed their agreement with the revolutionary socialist tactics.

The YCI Executive Committee refused to admit the French National Federation of Young Socialists into the Young Communist International on the grounds that it was still not free of social-pacifism.

There was a fierce struggle within the federa-



tion in the months that followed. The young revolutionaries, whose ranks swelled quickly, soon launched another campaign against the federation's leaders. The occasion for this were the talks with the Belgian socialist youth organisation, the Young Guards, at which the establishment of a new youth association was discussed. Most local organisations condemned their leaders' intrigues. As a result of the efforts made by the revolutionary minority, which was supported by most of the federation's members, a national congress was held.

The Extraordinary Congress of the National Federation of Young Socialists, held in Paris from October 30 to November 1, 1920, once again brought up the question of joining the YCI and turning the federation into the Young Communist League of France. In a resolution, adopted by 6,943 votes to 1,958, the congress pledged loyalty to the concepts of the workers' class struggle.

After a lengthy discussion, which at times became very heated, the congress proclaimed the establishment of the Young Communist League of France and elected both the Central Committee and the editorial staff of the league's central organ, the *l'Avant-Garde* (Vanguard) newspaper. This was a great achievement for the young French revolutionaries, who were guided by the leading representatives of the French working class.

After the congress the league embarked on its work most efficiently. Its Central Committee quickly won the support of several local socialist organisations with its successful anti-militarist propaganda, which infuriated the government, and started the publication of political literature and leaflets.

*L'Avant-Garde* won great prestige and became

very popular among the young workers. For a long time its editor-in-chief was Gabriel Péri, one of the most prominent leaders of the Communist Party of France who lost his life in the Second World War fighting for the cause of the working class against the German fascists.

When there was another army call-up in February 1921, the communist youth organisations began to spread anti-militarist propaganda intensively with the help of their special *Le Conscrit* (The Conscript) newspaper. The government took very severe measures against the communist youth organisations. The secretary of the Young Communist League, Maurice Laporte, was arrested on February 15 on charges of inciting servicemen to insubordination, and legal action was brought against the newspaper. The premises of the league's Central Committee were ransacked, property was confiscated, and about 40 activists were arrested.

In connection with this government persecution for anti-military propaganda, the Young Communist League put out a manifesto on February 17, 1921, which said in part: "Nothing can stop the Federation of Young Communists in the task which it has undertaken. The battle will continue despite the police and the magistrates on the government's payroll, the arrests, and perhaps even murder."<sup>1</sup>

These were not mere words. By their actions the young Communists showed that they were loyal to the cause of the working class.

The Young Communist League spread anti-militarist propaganda on so wide a scale that the ruling circles in France became alarmed at the

<sup>1</sup> *l'Humanité*, No. 6174, February 17, 1921.



situation. Acting as a mouthpiece for the rich bourgeoisie, the *Figaro* newspaper wrote: "The young people's anti-militarist campaigns make quick repression necessary because they are assuming a scope and violence that could endanger national security."

The Young Communist League of France held its first congress from May 15 to 16, 1921, to discuss urgent problems facing the working-class movement. In its resolution the congress acknowledged the need to use offensive tactics and to step up the struggle against opportunism in the working-class movement; it also discussed and approved the YCI Executive Committee's theses on relations between young communist leagues and Communist parties, according to which the parties were to have political leadership and the leagues were to be independent in organisational matters, propaganda and educational work.<sup>1</sup> The decisions it adopted helped the Young Communist League to establish closer ties with the Communist Party.

The young Communists' national congress was immediately followed by regional congresses all over the country. The young Communists of the Paris district, for instance, held a congress in late June, which was attended by 120 delegates representing 80 organisations. It approved the decisions adopted at the national congress and drew up a plan of work.

The resolutions adopted at the Second Congress of the YCI had a strong impact on the work carried on by the Young Communist League of France. A special conference was held in October 1921, which discussed the reorganisation of pro-

paganda work in the light of the decisions adopted at the congress and drew up a programme for winning over broad sections of the young people. The conference delegates were divided on the question of the economic struggle, which was being waged because young people were being more and more exploited. Some delegates continued to believe that the economic struggle was of secondary importance, and gave precedence to organisational tasks.

In an appeal to its members, the Central Committee of the Young Communist League of France emphasised the need to step up the economic struggle. It said: "It is quite incredible that in our country, where the most atrocious capitalist exploitation of the young people reigns supreme, we have been unable to draw them into the economic struggle for their vital interests. The young workers' situation, which in general is always graver than that of the adults, has deteriorated even further. The long working day, the extremely low wages, difficult living conditions and heavy unemployment can be regarded as its most typical features."<sup>1</sup>

The ranks of the Young Communist League of France swelled considerably within a year owing to the policy of drawing young workers into the active struggle, which it proclaimed at its first congress. It had about 6,000 members when it held its second congress, compared with a few hundred members in 1921. But this number was small in relation to the vast body of young French workers. Much work still had to be done before a mass organisation could be set up.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Humanité*, No. 6181, February 24, 1921.

<sup>1</sup> *International Youth Correspondence* No. 9-10, 1922, pp. 79-80.



The situation in *Italy* at the time was far more advantageous. Relying in its activities on a numerically strong contingent of young people, the Italian Socialist Party said in a report to the Second Congress of the Communist International that the "young socialists' movement with 50,000 members" was "quite a substantial" force.

The young revolutionaries began to play an important part in the country's political life and initiated the movement for the renewal of the socialist party. The leader of the Italian working class, Palmiro Togliatti, wrote at the time: "The young people, who started and headed the movement, and the workers from factories in Turin and other industrial centres who became its backbone, were unable to take the lead in national political life or even take on the leadership of the socialist party, owing to their inexperience and incapability and the conservative resistance offered by the officials of the traditional trade union and political movement; but although their prospects were limited, they raised in a new way the main questions of economic and political construction."<sup>1</sup>

The powerful upswing of the working-class movement and the strikes and demonstrations in 1920, in which the young people took a very active part, were an important political school for the young revolutionaries. Close ties with the socialist party and mutual representation on the central bodies even before the Second Congress of the Communist International adopted a decision on these points helped the young people a great deal in gaining experience of organisational work.

<sup>1</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Il partito comunista italiano*, Milano, 1958, p. 38.

The split in the socialist party at the congress in Livorno in January 1921 and the establishment of the Communist Party caused a corresponding division in the ranks of the young socialists. The young socialists held their eighth congress in Florence from January 27 to 29, 1921, at which they proclaimed themselves the Federation of Young Communists. This was a relatively easy victory for the supporters of the Communist Party, for out of the 60,000 members of the Federation of the Young Socialists of Italy, only 6,000 supported the socialist party. The congress adopted a new Programme and Rules drawn up by the Central Committee and declared its loyalty to the Communist International. It passed the following resolution: "Taking into account the results of the 18th Congress of the Italian Socialist Party and the establishment of the Italian Communist Party, a section of the Communist International, the Eighth Congress of the Federation of the Young Socialists of Italy, resolves to renounce further participation in the Italian Socialist Party with a view to supporting the Italian Communist Party in keeping with the requirements of the Communist International's Rules, and at the same time announces a change in the name of its organisation, which is to be called the Federation of the Young Communists of Italy."<sup>1</sup> Ninety per cent of the delegates voted for this resolution.

The congress played an important part in the subsequent development of the young Italian workers' movement. As its decisions were carried out, ties between the federation's new Central Committee and the local organisations were con-

<sup>1</sup> *Communist International* No. 17, 1921, p. 4406.



solidated and new groups were set up in several Italian provinces. An end was soon put to the weak centralisation and poor discipline, inherited from the socialist league.

The work which the Federation of the Young Communists of Italy carried on at the time was greatly appreciated by the YCI Executive Committee. In a special appeal to the young Italian Communists, the committee said: "We are strongly convinced that by your vigorous activities you will succeed in drawing not only more young people who up to now have remained indifferent, but also the majority of the unitarian group which split away from you in Florence, into the Federation of the Young Communists of Italy, the Young Communist International and the cause of the proletarian revolution."

As soon as it was established, the Italian Communist Party began to guide and help the youth movement. In response to its appeal the communist youth organisations took a very active part in setting up communist cells at factories all over the country. In this connection the young Communists held a district congress in early 1921 at which they adopted a resolution proposed by Palmiro Togliatti on the establishment of communist cells.

About 10,000 of the federation's best members joined the Communist Party to consolidate its ranks. In accordance with a decision adopted by the federation's Central Committee, the young Communists held regional congresses in July and August 1921 to discuss practical activities and ways of consolidating the organisation's links. These congresses demonstrated that the young Italian Communists were strongly united.

The young workers stoutly resisted the increased

activities of the Italian fascist organisations. Together with the party, they took part in clashes with fascist bands, and when these clashes became frequent, they set up special detachments on military lines to make their opposition more effective.

Members of the socialist party and its youth leagues began to sympathise more and more with the Communists as the Communist Party and the Federation of Young Communists took resolute action against fascist bands. As far back as the young socialists' second congress, which mainly discussed the question of entry into the Young Communist International, most delegates supported the idea of concerted action with the young Communists against the fascists, but the young socialists' leaders once again succeeded in preventing the adoption of such a decision.

As the fascists mounted their offensive, the Federation of Young Communists had to reorganise its ranks. Moreover, it had to do so illegally. Preparing for a fierce battle against fascism, the young people decided to set up militant groups which would defend democratic freedoms with arms.

The decisions of the Second Congress of the Young Communist International helped to consolidate communist youth organisations. In its special theses on the youth movement in Italy, the YCI Executive Committee criticised it for its "lack of centralised discipline, one-sided party and political agitational work, and revolutionism in mere words."

The young Italian workers managed to overcome these deficiencies. In close touch with the Communist Party, the Italian communist youth organisations "made a very big contribution to



the cause of the struggle against fascism"<sup>1</sup>. Many youth leaders, including Luigi Longo and Pietro Secchia, later became prominent leaders in the Italian Communist Party.

Unfortunately, the Communist parties and communist youth leagues in some of the other European countries were not so influential, and most of their young people fell under the reformists' and bourgeois leaders' influence. This was true of Britain, Belgium, Austria and several countries in the Balkans and the Danube basin.

In Britain the socialist youth movement was not set up until after the First World War. One of the main reasons why socialist youth organisations arose so late was that the young workers enjoyed relatively tolerable economic conditions, and there was a better system of labour protection for adolescents. Another important fact was that, motivated by selfish aims, the British bourgeoisie showed great "concern" for the education of working-class children and subsidised Boy scout organisations, Sunday schools, and so on. The ruling circles in Britain sought to educate the rising generation in a spirit of obedience, indifference to politics and loyalty to the bourgeois homeland, which they succeeded in doing in a very subtle and calculated way.

The young British people set up their first socialist groups as a result of the impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the upswing in the world working-class movement, which involved Britain as well. Work among the young people was carried on very successfully in the north of England and Scotland. The young

workers' first organisations, however, concentrated exclusively on educational work and physical training, and naturally could not become mass organisations. The Young Socialist League of Great Britain was set up in London in 1917. Its aim was to spread socialist ideas among young people who had just left school. Its organ was *The Young Rebel* newspaper. But the league, which was largely made up of ex-soldiers who opposed militarism, did not have a permanent nucleus of members. This was also more or less true of the Young Labour League, a small group carrying on propaganda work.

The development of the communist youth movement was greatly hindered by its scattered ranks and the existence of many youth organisations. Among the largest of these organisations was the Tory Party's youth section, the Young Conservatives, which had many young workers among its members; next came the various religious youth associations, and so on. With a membership of about 400,000, Boy scouts continued to be the largest youth organisation in Britain at the time.

The YCI Executive Committee often tried unsuccessfully to unite the scattered socialist youth groups in Britain.

The young socialists opened their first national conference in the International Socialist Club in London on March 27, 1921, with a view to approving a plan for uniting the Young Socialist League and the Young Labour League. Although after lengthy discussion agreement was reached on unification, it was decided that, like all other adults' organisations, the new organisation should be independent.

It was also agreed to start publication of *The*

<sup>1</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Il partito comunista italiano*, Milano, 1958, p. 41.



*Young Worker* in April 1921. In a resolution the conference greeted the young people of Soviet Russia, who had taken up arms to defend the Great October Socialist Revolution, and also promised to take an active part in the workers' common struggle.<sup>1</sup>

However, the conference never really united the young workers' organisations.

Britain still had no communist youth organisation when the Young Communist International held its second congress in Moscow in July 1921. When the young British workers' delegates returned from Moscow, they carried out together with the Central Committee of the Communist Party the enormous task of laying the organisational foundations for the Young Communist League. The Young Communist League of Great Britain, which consisted of the young progressive workers and students, was set up in 1922.

A similar situation existed in *Austria*. Ever since it was established, the Communist Union of Youth faced great difficulties owing to the existence of many socialist youth organisations in the country and the transfer of many members who had played the most active part in the union to party work. But the greatest obstacle of all was possibly the failure of many union members to realise the need for an independent youth organisation. However, by helping the Communist Party, participating in all the workers' actions against the bourgeoisie and distributing Communist Party leaflets, political literature and newspapers, the Communist Union of Youth became the true centre of the young revo-

lutionaries and its membership increased. By July 1921 it had 41 groups with 1,500 members compared with a few groups totalling about 500 members when it was set up. In its work the union attached great importance to giving assistance to the young revolutionaries in Soviet Russia and Hungary.

Acting against the wishes of its leaders, the union held a special meeting together with the Austrian Socialist Union of Youth in August 1921 to discuss the question of rendering assistance to Soviet Russia. As a result, the meeting elected a joint committee for the collection of funds.

After the Second Congress of the YCI, the young Communists held a national congress in Vienna on September 17 and 18, 1921. This congress, the most important one since the union was set up, discussed the following agenda: 1) Central Committee's report; 2) delegation's report on the Moscow congresses; 3) urgent economic and political tasks, and other questions. There was an interesting debate on youth participation in the economic struggle and the young workers' joining of trade unions, formerly considered as completely unnecessary.

The congress adopted a resolution approving the decisions of the Second Congress of the YCI and outlining practical measures for their implementation. After a lengthy period of organisational formation, the Austrian Communist Union of Youth resolutely embarked on the struggle for the workers' cause.

In *Bulgaria* Social-Democratic youth organisations were not set up until the eve of the First World War. The youth movement was under the influence and guidance of the revolutionary wing

<sup>1</sup> *The Worker's Dreadnought*, No. 3, Vol. VIII, April 2, 1921.



of the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Bulgaria (the *Tesnyaki*). Owing to its small membership, the young workers' organisation had very strong centralisation and strict discipline.

The founding of the Communist Party of Bulgaria in May 1919 and its affiliation to the Communist International had a strong impact on the young workers. On May 26, 1919, immediately after the party congress, the Social-Democratic Youth League held a conference at which it adopted a decision to set up the Young Communist League of Bulgaria (YCLB). The conference announced that the YCLB would join the Communist International and adopted the Programme of the Communist Party of Bulgaria as a guide to action.

Another conference was held on May 30 and 31, 1920, which discussed the work carried out over the past year, amendments to the league's Rules and matters concerning the international youth movement. The Young Communist League of Bulgaria had 3,640 members at this point.

The young people's active participation in strikes, demonstrations, distribution of leaflets and all the workers' activities won the young Communists high prestige among young people in the town and countryside. As Bulgaria was an agrarian country, communist youth organisations attached great importance to work among young people in the countryside and set up special "village commissions". The league's membership increased considerably and by mid-1922 it was 15,000.

The young communist youth organisation in Bulgaria differed from other sections of the Young Communist International in that it was completely subordinate to the Communist Party, which

even appointed its leaders. Obviously, it did not have to worry about relations with the Communist Party, unlike in other countries, where the problem of relations between young people and Communist parties became a very pressing one, hampering the work that had to be carried out. These close organisational ties with the Communist Party also determined the league's activities, gave it a strong sense of direction and made it the Party's loyal helpmate.

In *Czechoslovakia* the young workers were members of the Austrian Socialist Union of Youth during the First World War and were under the Social-Democratic Party's influence. The socialist youth organisations led a wretched existence, not daring to protest against the war or defend their rights. These organisations did not step up their activities until 1919. The main obstacle was that, like the Social-Democratic and other parties, separate youth organisations existed for the various nationalities, Czech, Slovak, German and Hungarian.

A movement began among the young workers' organisations in 1920 to break away from the Social-Democratic Party which was led by the avowed opportunists in the working-class movement. The young Social-Democrats convened a congress in Prague on February 20, 1921 to set up an independent communist youth organisation.

The congress, which was attended by the representatives of the Czech, Slovak, German and Hungarian youth leagues, adopted a decision to set up a united Young Communist League of Czechoslovakia without national sections. The ranks of the newly established Young Communist League, which supported the decisions adopted by the Young Communist International, quickly



swelled with the most progressive young workers. By early 1922 the league had over 20,000 members while the Socialist Union of Youth had only 17,000.

A conference was held in Prague in July 1921 to discuss a report by the league's Central Committee and a report on the league's Draft Rules. The speakers emphasised that, despite persecution, the league had stepped up its activities and carried out some important work. At the same time it was mentioned that insufficient attention was paid to organisational questions, and that abstract propaganda did not and could not help draw broad sections of the young people into the league. The struggle against nationalist trends was given prominence. The conference emphasised the communist movement's influence on the young socialists, who took an active part in several of the Young Communist League's activities without fearing that they would be excluded from their organisations for their "radical frame of mind." There was a lengthy discussion on the second item on the conference's agenda, the league's Draft Rules, which were to take account of all the country's national features. It was with this end in view that a decision was adopted to publish the league's central organ, the *Young Communist* newspaper, in Czech, Slovak, German and Hungarian.

The YCL Central Committee which the congress in Prague elected could not cope with the task of guiding such a large multinational organisation as the league. The errors made when the committee was elected were rectified only with the intervention of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the YCI Executive Committee. A Provisional Committee was set up which

*Arbetarungdom i alla land, förena er!*

## Till all världens arbetare- och bondeungdom!



På den ryska proletär-  
revolutionens tioårsdag.

Tryckeriaktiebolaget Fram - Stockholm 1927

Cover of the Appeal by the Executive  
Committee of the Young Communist  
International to the young working people of  
all countries, published by the Young  
Communist League of Sweden. 1927





November 10, 1945. Participants in the World Youth Conference in London have set up the World Federation of Democratic Youth

vigorously began to improve the league's work.

The Young Communist League of Czechoslovakia, which was in close touch with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, overcame many difficulties during its organisational period; both in legal and illegal work among the young workers, it showed its power and became the Communist Party's loyal helpmate.

In *Yugoslavia* the first young workers' organisations were set up under the direct influence of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia and the upswing of the working-class movement in the West European countries. The country's grave economic situation severely affected the young workers, and as a rule the adolescents worked ten hours or more a day. Even the most rudimentary conditions for labour protection did not exist. The young workers began to set up the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia during the grim days of reaction in October 1919. The league's aim was to mobilise the young people for the struggle for democratic rights, social justice, freedom and independence. The Communist Party and the Young Communist League were banned and had to go underground as early as 1920. League members were constantly persecuted, arrested and even murdered.

The young Communists held their first congress in July 1920, at which they summed up the results of the organisational period and drew up practical measures to help the Communist Party spread leaflets, newspapers, and so on. The congress gave prominence to supporting the party in the elections to the constituent assembly.

Owing to its lively participation in the workers' political activities, the league quickly grew into a large organisation with a membership of



about 10,000 very conscientious young workers. This large membership for a relatively small country with a poorly developed industry clearly shows that the league carried out an enormous amount of work. The youth organisation started publication of its newspaper, *Crvena zastava* (Red Banner), which as early as 1920 and 1921 had a circulation of 6,000.

The league set up a large network of organisations throughout the country. By mid-1921 it had 45 local organisations. Through its practical activities it brought about a radical change in the attitude of young people and established good relations with the trade union organisations.

Communist youth organisations were set up in other countries as well. In close touch with the Communist parties, they overcame organisational and ideological difficulties. By combining legal and illegal methods in their work among the young proletariat, they passed the test and rendered valuable assistance to the Communist parties.

The Young Communist International helped consolidate the international youth movement and turn it into a powerful working-class contingent.

Although the Young Communist International did make several grave errors, by the time of its third congress it had taken the correct road of revolutionary struggle and was confidently leading the international young workers' movement.

## Chapter IV UNDER LENIN'S BANNER

### 1. Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union—Vanguard of the International Communist Movement

The establishment of the Young Communist International accelerated the development of the youth movement and consolidated yet further the contingents of young workers under Lenin's banner.

The RYCL made a particularly valuable contribution. As early as its third congress, it declared that its sacred duty was to render assistance to the young workers' organisations in the capitalist countries. The congress decisions stressed that the league's most important task was to instil in its members the spirit of the young workers' international solidarity and to spread the Youth International's ideas and information on the international youth movement among the young Russian workers and peasants.<sup>1</sup>

The young people of the first socialist country developed and consolidated international ties as they carried out Lenin's behests and the decisions adopted at the Third Congress of the RYCL. A recognised authority on the most important problems facing the youth movement, the RYCL helped to set up young communist leagues in various countries and overcome "vanguardism" in

<sup>1</sup> *Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League*, Verbatim report (Russ. ed.), Moscow-Leningrad, 1926, p. 278.



several youth organisations; it also played an important part in the recognition of the Communist parties' leading role.

When the international communist youth movement's headquarters was moved to Moscow, closer ties were established between the RYCL and the representatives of young communist leagues abroad who came to the YCI Executive Committees' congresses and plenary meetings.

The correspondence and meetings with representatives of foreign communist youth organisations helped to develop an internationalist spirit among the young Soviet people. The material assistance which Soviet young people rendered to their brothers abroad also contributed greatly to the development of proletarian internationalism. Besides taking an active part in the collection of international dues, the RYCL launched a big agitational campaign to consolidate international ties and explain the young working people's situation abroad and their struggle to improve their economic position.

The Russian Young Communist League, which consistently supported the unity of all the working-class contingents, was one of the initiators of talks with the Young Socialist International (YSI), a mass young workers' organisation in the capitalist countries which was under social-reformist influence. Taking into account the strong desire for concerted action of the YSI rank and file, the CC RYCL and the YCI Executive Committee sent a letter to the YSI Executive Committee in August 1925 proposing the setting up of a united front for the young workers' movement. Unfortunately, like several other proposals made at various times, it found no support with the young socialists' leaders.

The guidance of the Young Communist International's foreign sections by the Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union (LYCLSU)<sup>1</sup> assumed an organisational form in early 1925, and this helped establish permanent ties with young communist league members in other countries.

The foreign delegations' visits to the Soviet Union played a very important part in consolidating international ties. For instance, a delegation representing Austrian youth organisations spent a whole month in Soviet Russia in September 1925. When they returned home the Vienna delegates made an impressive report, on the basis of which a special resolution was adopted. This resolution said in part: "In their eight-year-old heroic struggle against a whole world of enemies, the Russian workers and proletarian youth have created for themselves labour conditions which are a shining example to workers at large. The Russian revolution's achievements—a four- and six-hour working day, adequate wages, a month to six weeks paid leave . . . encourage us Austrians to improve the young Austrian people's position by vigorous struggle."<sup>2</sup>

The same year representatives of young people in Germany, France, Belgium and Czechoslovakia also visited the Soviet Union.

The Central Committee of the LYCLSU approved new forms of stimulating international understanding which had arisen as a result of close contact between young people in Soviet

<sup>1</sup> The Russian Young Communist League was later renamed the Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union.—Tr.

<sup>2</sup> *The Four-Year Existence of the Young Communist International* (Russ. ed.), Moscow-Leningrad, 1928, p. 37.



Russia and other countries. These included international soirées to which members of foreign delegations were invited, active young communist league members' study sessions on the international communist youth movement, circles for studying foreign languages, and a regular exchange of publications.

After dealing with the question of expanding international ties, the CC LYCLSU adopted the following appeal to young workers at large in April 1926: "We once again fraternally call on you comrades to send young workers' delegates to our country. Choose them at the factories, at the young workers' conferences and in workers' organisations. Let them be people of various political trends. If they really represent the young workers and really want to find out about our life and struggle, they are welcome. The young workers of Soviet Russia will welcome them as dear guests, as brothers in labour and as class brothers."

Unable to send Soviet youth delegations abroad because foreign governments refused to grant them entry visas, the LYCLSU organisations made use of foreign delegations' visits to Soviet Russia to expose bourgeois allegations that young people in Soviet Russia suffered poor conditions and were politically inactive. First-hand knowledge of life in Soviet Russia and the activities of the LYCLSU organisations inspired young people in capitalist countries with revolutionary enthusiasm, made them intensify the struggle against the capitalist system, and produced a keener sense of proletarian internationalism.

When they returned home, most delegates started to agitate for a new, socialist society and demanded that the imperialist governments end

their aggressive policy towards the Soviet Union.

It became customary for youth delegations to make reports after visiting the Soviet Union. A British youth delegation which had visited the Soviet Union launched a campaign to mobilise young workers to support the Soviet Union. British workers held a grand rally in Glasgow, at which they adopted a resolution greeting the young Soviet workers and undertaking to fight against all encroachments on the Soviet Union.

A young French workers' delegation returned from the Soviet Union and launched an extensive campaign. Ten rallies were held in the Paris district. The delegates visited all the large industrial centres in northern, central and southern France, where they received a warm welcome.

Correspondence also played an important part in consolidating international ties. No less than one hundred young communist league cells in the Soviet Union corresponded with their counterparts in the West. The Soviet cells' correspondence greatly encouraged the Western comrades' work. Young workers in capitalist countries wrote saying that adolescents were deprived of all rights at the factories, and that the workers were waging an economic and political struggle in which they were taking part. In a letter to the young workers at the Krasny Proletary Printshop, German workers in Mannheim said that their factory owner was a tyrant and they worked from 12 to 15 hours a day. They also described the establishment of a communist youth organisation at the factory and their struggle against the factory owners.

The Young Communist League of Germany held a conference in 1927 to discuss the question of consolidating ties with LYCLSU organisations.



The conference adopted a decision stressing that it considered "close ties between all the German cells and the LYCLSU cells to be most important".

Young American workers wrote from Chicago saying that they would like to receive information about the position of the Soviet workers in the clothing industry, their wages, trade union activities and political work. They were also interested in relations between the foreman and workers, and in the young communist league cells' practical activities.

The enormous amount of work which the LYCLSU did in consolidating ties with young communist league members in capitalist countries was praised by the Fifth Congress of the Young Communist International, which passed a resolution saying that the LYCLSU was doing a great deal "to support, both morally and materially, the young communist leagues in the capitalist and colonial countries... The congress believes it to be an important task to extend and strengthen ties between the young workers at large and the young emancipated proletariat in the Soviet Union"<sup>1</sup>.

The development of international ties enabled the LYCLSU to step up its activities. The CC LYCLSU stressed that LYCLSU organisations were devoting considerable attention to promoting international understanding and that it was an organic part of the league's everyday educational work.

A special decision was adopted to hold an all-Union review of international ties in 1928.

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<sup>1</sup> *Resolution of the Fifth Congress of the YCI* (Russ. ed.), Moscow, 1929, p. 25.

LYCLSU guidance of young communist league organisations abroad grew during preparations for the review. In 1928, 51 republican and regional LYCLSU organisations set up contacts with young communist leagues abroad.

By taking an active part in the work of the International Red Aid (IRA), the LYCLSU contributed greatly to proletarian internationalism. The Soviet IRA organisation had contact with 291 political prisons in various countries. Besides material, moral and legal aid to the prisoners, the organisation gave assistance to their families and political emigrés.

The visits of Soviet delegations to capitalist countries played an important part in the development of the young Soviet people's international ties. There were many young people in the first Soviet delegation, which toured Europe on the S/S *Abkhazia*, visiting Hamburg, Naples, Istanbul and other cities. The delegates stayed in Hamburg for three days, where they visited German workers and talked to young communist league members. On their return home the delegates gave an account of their trip to workers at factories and mines, and made concrete proposals for improving international understanding.

The Soviet delegation's participation in the anti-war and anti-fascist youth congress, held in Paris in the autumn of 1933, furthered the growth of the LYCLSU's prestige and the consolidation of international ties. For the first time ever youth representatives of the two worlds met in the heart of capitalist Europe.

The report made by the leader of the Soviet delegation and first secretary of the CC LYCLSU, A. V. Kosarev, was warmly welcomed. The So-



viet delegation's determined stand and strong sense of responsibility for the fate of mankind determined the course of the congress, which helped to consolidate progressive young people in the struggle against war and fascism.

The young people carried out the decisions adopted at the congress by holding anti-fascist congresses in France, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and other countries in 1934. Although Soviet young people could not take part in these congresses, they warmly welcomed their decisions. In a telegram to the anti-fascist congress of Swedish youth, the CC LYCLSU said: "On behalf of the millions of builders of socialism, we warmly welcome the congress and wish you success in the struggle for a united front against war and fascism. We always have been and always will be with you in this struggle."

The LYCLSU and the young communist leagues in the capitalist countries regarded the exposure of the fascist ideology as one of their main tasks. This task could be carried out only if a united front were set up and the forces of the progressive youth organisations at large were united.

The World Youth Conference, held in Paris in April 1935, praised the LYCLSU activities in consolidating and developing international ties and its participation in the struggle against fascism. In its address to the young Soviet people, the conference said: "No world youth league that struggles for these aims is complete without you, without the young people of the country whose peace-loving policy is inspiring and consolidating the common ties between all the true champions of peace."

The fascists' assumption of power in Germany, open preparations for a war against the Soviet Union, and the establishment of an anti-Soviet bloc called for the unity of all the workers' forces. The anti-fascist movement grew in the ranks of the working class, and the need to set up a united workers' front became ever more pressing.

The Sixth Congress of the Young Communist International, held in Moscow in the autumn of 1935, was of especial importance to the development of international ties and the unity of the young workers' organisations in the struggle against fascism. The youth congress was attended by such prominent leaders of the international communist movement as Georgi Dimitrov, Wilhelm Pieck, Maurice Thorez, Palmiro Togliatti and Klement Gottwald. In his speech at the congress, Georgi Dimitrov formulated the tasks facing young communist league members as follows: "The young communist leagues must strive in every possible way to unite all the non-fascist mass youth organisations even to the extent of setting up various general organisations for the struggle against fascism, unparalleled injustice and the militarisation of young people, and for the economic and cultural rights of the rising generation and to win these young people over to the anti-fascist front, wherever they may be."<sup>1</sup>

The YCI congress decisions attached special importance to achieving unity of action with the socialist youth organisations.

The resolution which the congress adopted said: "In the cause of uniting all the young working people, the congress believes it to be the pri-

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<sup>1</sup> G. Dimitrov, *In the Struggle for a United Front Against Fascism and War* (Russ. ed.), Moscow, 1937, p. 43.



mary task of the young communist leagues to achieve unity with the socialist youth leagues."

In implementing the decisions adopted at the Sixth Congress of the Young Communist International, the young communist leagues carried out an enormous amount of work to establish close ties with the basic socialist youth organisations which, in several instances, joined forces in the anti-fascist struggle against their leaders' will. An increasing number of religious, athletic and other youth associations began to take part in these concerted actions by the communist and socialist youth organisations, and this made it possible to start preparations for an international youth congress.

The first international youth congress, attended by delegates from 36 countries representing various trends in the youth movement (fascist excepted), was held in Geneva in September 1936.

In his speech at the congress on behalf of the young Soviet people, A. V. Kosarev formulated the main tasks facing the young people at large. He said: "We sincerely and ardently appeal from the rostrum of the world youth congress to the young people of all countries, organisations and nationalities—let us consolidate peace!"

The young Soviet people, who followed the young communist leagues' struggle in other countries and rendered them assistance, highly valued their activities. The Soviet people ardently supported the Spanish people in their heroic struggle against fascism. The young Soviet people's proletarian solidarity was expressed especially clearly during those difficult years. Meetings and rallies were held throughout the country calling for

an end to the intervention by other states in the affairs of the Republic of Spain.

Young workers at a factory in Moscow held a meeting at which they adopted a message of greetings to the young Spanish people. The message said in part: "In these days of fierce battle, we want to tell you, our Spanish brothers and sisters, you, the young Spanish people, to continue your courageous struggle for the Democratic Republic of Spain.... We are with you, dear Spanish comrades; gathered together at this meeting in defence of the Spanish people's courageous struggle, we send you our warm greetings.

"We have adopted a decision to give one-quarter of our daily wages to assist the Spanish fighters' families. We are confident that thousands of young working people in our country will follow our example, because it is a great joy to all of us to be of help to you in the struggle for the free Republic of Spain."

The movement was especially widespread on the eve of the Second World War. The tense international situation and the German fascists' frenzied war preparations created a real threat to peace and security. The youth movement's aim was to unite all the young people's democratic forces for a joint struggle against the threat of fascist aggression.

Emphasising the enormous amount of work which the YCI carried out in the struggle against the threat of war, the French Communist Party's central organ wrote: "Ever since it was established, the Young Communist International has been loyal to the traditions of the struggle against war."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *l'Humanité*, No. 11580, August 28, 1930.



The YCI Executive Committee and the CC LYCLSU frequently proposed uniting the young working people in a common anti-fascist front, but the Right-wing socialists invariably opposed all efforts to set up a democratic young peoples' united front. In the summer of 1939, when nazi Germany was preparing for new acts of aggression in Europe, another attempt was made, this time at a conference of European young communist leagues, to unite the socialist youth organisations in the struggle against fascism. It failed, however, because the Young Socialist International's leaders, who were agents of the bourgeoisie in the youth movement, pursued a policy of "non-interference" and capitulation to the fascist aggressors like their leaders in the Socialist International.

The absence of a united popular front greatly facilitated the unleashing of another world war.

The war caused the LYCLSU's international ties with the young communist leagues to diminish sharply. The youth leagues' actions on a national scale became increasingly important. As the Resistance Movement grew, the young communist league organisations switched from propaganda activities to a vigorous armed struggle against fascism.

Judging it inexpedient to maintain a single centre for the international working-class movement because this partly gave rise to bourgeois slander about "Moscow's interference" in other countries' internal affairs, the Executive Committee of the Communist International adopted a resolution on May 15, 1943, to disband the Third Communist International. This decision, approved by the Communist parties of the world and the Young Communist International, meant that the

international communist youth organisation would also cease to exist as a section of the Communist International.

Closely linked with the Communist parties and continuing the YCI's best traditions, the communist youth organisations are consistently and staunchly defending the young working people's interests in every country.

Mankind faced a terrible threat during the Second World War, when German armies occupied almost the whole of Europe. The Soviet Union's entry into the war marked a turning point, determined its outcome, and inspired and consolidated the Resistance Movement in the occupied countries. In France, Czechoslovakia and Poland many thousands of young people joined guerrilla detachments in the forests and set up underground organisations in towns and cities; these organisations waged a relentless struggle against the invader. It was the Communists and the young communist league members who organised the Resistance Movement.

The Soviet peoples were in the vanguard of the democratic forces' struggle against fascism. The young Soviet people and the LYCLSU set young democrats the world over an example of selfless struggle for freedom and independence against the armies of the nazi invader.

The young Soviet people held a large anti-fascist rally in Moscow in September 1941, at which they adopted an appeal to the young people of the world to unite all their forces in the struggle against the arch-enemy of mankind, fascism. This appeal was warmly supported by the young people at large. Following the Soviet Union's example, many countries set up anti-fascist youth committees.



With the active participation of Soviet young people, an international youth conference was held in London in November 1942, which was attended by the young democrats' representatives from 28 countries. The Conference, at which the World Youth Council was set up, was the first step towards international unity in the youth movement. With the Soviet representatives' participation, the World Youth Council carried on fruitful work during the war to increase the young democrats' international ties.

## 2. The Young People's International Communist and Democratic Movement Today

The emergence of the world socialist system after the Second World War, the achievements made by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, the growth of the national-liberation movement, the aggravation of imperialism's internal socio-economic and political contradictions and many other factors roused broad sections of the working and young people to vigorous action and created favourable conditions for the growth of the Communist parties' influence among the masses and for a new flourishing of the international communist and democratic youth movement.

Young people are beginning to realise with increasing clarity that capitalism is organically incapable of solving its basic problems. That is why, together with the working class, which has established itself in all the continents as the main social force of modern society, they are actively participating in the everyday struggle which the Communist and Workers' parties, trade unions,



May 31, 1970. Moscow. Opening of the World Youth Rally called "Leninism and the Young People's Struggle for Peace, National Independence, Democracy and Social Progress"



women's organisations, and other workers' progressive organisations are waging for the solution of urgent problems.

The young communist leagues, which in several countries, including Britain, France and Italy, have turned into mass militant organisations enjoying high prestige among the young democrats, are in the vanguard of those fighting for the young people's interests. The youth leagues are growing and consolidating their ranks in Austria and Norway. The young Communists are waging a difficult underground struggle for their rights in Spain, Portugal, Greece and other countries where they are subject to constant persecution.

The young people, who are beginning to understand what is the root of all evil, are determined to settle accounts with the bourgeoisie. Young people in various countries are steadily increasing their political activities in the struggle for democracy and progress. These activities are part of the general struggle being waged by the working people and the democratic forces.

Seeing that young people would soon be "social dynamite" for capitalism, the US Government is taking all possible measures to distract their attention from acute social problems and the workers' active struggle. No wonder that when he became president, Richard Nixon announced the establishment of a department for young people at the White House as early as February, 1969. The task of this department is to study youth problems and make proposals for solving them.

The mass participation of young people in all spheres of struggle against imperialism and reaction, for better living and labour conditions and



greater political rights, shows that they belong to the Left-wing forces and are helping the revolution.

To confuse world public opinion and justify the domination of the underdeveloped countries, US Government circles are increasingly referring to the "mass infiltration" of Communists, who are allegedly inciting young people to riot and overthrow the government, into the youth movement in the Latin American countries.

The courageous struggle which the young students in Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay are waging against the dictatorial regimes, the young people's constant battle in Panama for the re-establishment of the country's sovereignty over the Canal Zone, the young people's anti-imperialist protests in Colombia and the Colombian students' attempt to burn the hateful US flag during demonstrations do not speak of "communist infiltration". On the contrary, they go to show that US imperialism, the suppressor of freedom, democracy and man's basic rights, has penetrated into the countries of Latin America.

The growth of young people's political awareness, and their choice of socialism in the main dispute of the century between socialism and capitalism, are the result of the objective contradictions between the young people's interests and aspirations, on the one hand, and capitalism, which is preventing them from being realised, on the other.

No wonder it was the young people who formed the core of the revolutionary forces in Cuba, Algeria, Egypt and several other countries which overthrew the reactionary regimes and began to build a new life.

The young people are still an important shock

force in the struggle for their greater socio-economic and political rights.

Today this fact is borne out especially clearly by heroic Vietnam, which has made the imperialists reckon with it as a strong political force.

Imperialism is unable to oppose the great communist concepts with any positive ideals that would fire the enthusiasm of young people.

Which side will the rising generations support and which road will they take? This is the question worrying all the political forces in the world today. Lenin once said: "There is no party in the civilised countries that does not realise the tremendous value of the widest and most firmly established educational and trade unions; but each seeks to have its own influence predominate in them."<sup>1</sup>

The youth movement has always clearly reflected all the social and political processes in various countries and the world as a whole. Young people are taking an active and direct part in all the events and spheres of human activity in the socialist, capitalist and developing countries. The role and importance of young people and their numerous organisations in the life of their countries and in the international arena extends beyond youth issues alone.

Today, the international youth movement is largely distinguished by its struggle against war and aggression. This struggle has united the young people of various views, ideologies and creeds into a single anti-imperialist front.

The Communist parties' influence on young people has increased markedly. This is borne out

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 50.



by the growing number of young people adopting a Marxist-Leninist stand and joining Communist parties and youth organisations. The First Congress of the YCI in 1919 was represented by 14 youth leagues with 229,000 members. Today there are young communist leagues in over 70 countries, and they have more than 80 million members.

Among these young communist leagues, the ones in the socialist countries are the most organised and active. They are taking an active part in the construction of socialism and communism in their countries, and are rendering all-out support and assistance to young people in countries which have either won or are trying to win independence.

Most young communist leagues in capitalist countries have markedly consolidated their stand and increased their membership. They are rallying the most progressive and conscientious young people in the struggle for democracy, workers' unity and the working people's rights against monopoly capital's oppression.

Although the young communist leagues face different tasks in the various countries, they are all united by loyalty to communist ideals, party principle, and the desire to unite all the Left-wing forces in the struggle against imperialist oppression.

The young Communists have to act under extremely difficult conditions in a bitter struggle against the forces of imperialist reaction which are backed by the state machinery, the army and the police.

Since 1958 the young communist league members in Britain have taken an active part in the Aldermaston marches for peace and nuclear dis-

armament and against the government's suicidal and reckless policies.

Together with their counterparts from the Soviet Union, Poland, the GDR and other socialist countries, the young communist league members from the Scandinavian countries and Finland take part in conferences and seminars demanding that a nuclear-free zone be established in Central and Northern Europe and that the Mediterranean and the Baltic be turned into "seas of peace".

Young communist league members in Britain, West Germany, Italy, Belgium and other states are likewise intensifying their struggle against their countries' membership in the aggressive NATO bloc and participation in setting up NATO's multilateral nuclear forces, and for the elimination of all imperialist military blocs, which constitute a mortal danger to all peoples and could lead to another world war.

Young communist league members in France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and many other countries are stepping up their youth solidarity movement against imperialist intervention, racial oppression in the Republic of South Africa and the United States, and interference in the internal affairs of the countries of Latin America. They are staging more and more demonstrations in support of the peoples in Angola, "Portuguese" Guinea, Mozambique, South Arabia and other countries fighting for national independence.

The young people regard the struggle for disarmament and against imperialist aggression and intervention not only as the quickest road to peace, but also as a means of solving other problems and improving their position. However, many youth leagues in the capitalist countries still face



extremely difficult conditions. The World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), the vanguard of the progressive young people, is playing a big part in consolidating the young people's international solidarity.

The WFDY, which was set up at the World Youth Conference in London on November 10, 1945, is the largest international youth organisation and enjoys very high prestige. It unites about 200 various national youth organisations in 96 countries representing over 100 million young people.

The WFDY has always strongly sided with the most active forces for peace, national independence, democracy and progress, fought for the recognition and realisation of the young people's basic rights, and done its best to help spread the ideas of solidarity, peace and friendship.

The Second World War had barely ended when imperialism started the "cold war", which was fraught with the danger of another world war. In November 1948 the WFDY launched a wide-scale peace campaign which involved millions of young people. The WFDY and the organisations belonging to it took an active part in the campaign against US aggression in Korea and the colonial war in Indochina. True to its principles, the WFDY is strongly denouncing US imperialism and its allies, who are responsible for the aggravation of international tension. The federation is mobilising the young people at large for an uncompromising struggle against US militarist policy and the aggressive blocs of NATO, SEATO and CENTO. Among other things, the WFDY took an active part in collecting signatures for the Stockholm Appeal, carried out measures to support the proposals made by the peace-lov-

ing and progressive forces for general and complete disarmament, staged mass demonstrations for easing international tension, expressed solidarity with the young Arab people against the triple imperialist aggression in 1956, launched a powerful and truly world-wide campaign of solidarity with the Cuban people and youth, particularly during the Caribbean crisis, and campaigns against West German revanchism and neo-nazism, strongly opposed Israeli aggression in the Middle East, and carried on activities to increase solidarity with fighting Vietnam.

The struggle for peace and for European and general security is always the most important principle in the WFDY's action programmes. The federation took part in the World Forum of Solidarity of Youth and Students in the Fight for National Independence and Liberation, for Peace held in 1964, and in the Consultative Meeting of European Youth Organisations held in Warsaw in 1967.

The WFDY is leading young people in the struggle for national independence and against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. The federation organised and took an active part in the powerful solidarity and protest campaigns, and initiated broad programmes of moral support and material assistance to the fighting peoples and youth in Asia, Africa and Latin America. At its initiative, the young democratic people of the world annually celebrate April 24 as the International Youth Solidarity Day. The International Solidarity Aid Fund was set up under the WFDY to render practical assistance to youth organisations working under difficult conditions, particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America.



The federation has condemned the crimes committed by the colonialists in Algeria, Angola, South-West Africa and Mozambique and by the racists in South Africa and Rhodesia, the Portuguese colonialists' inhuman war in Africa and the acts of aggression by imperialism and world reaction in the Congo, the Middle East and South-West Asia. It has come out with many proposals for consolidating solidarity with the young African peoples in their struggle for complete liberation from all forms of colonial oppression and for truly independent development and progress. The federation has taken an active part in the work of the International Committee of Solidarity with the Young People in the Portuguese Colonies in Africa, who are fighting for freedom, and has called for support of the struggle waged by the people and youth in the Congo (Kinshasa) against intervention by the imperialist states and agents of imperialism in its internal affairs. Other measures of solidarity carried out at the WFDY's initiative include the International Seminar of the Young People Against Racism held in Tanzania in 1966, and the International Conference of Solidarity with the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies and against Portuguese colonialism in Africa held in Guinea in 1967.

The federation is consolidating its ties with the young people in the Arab countries and giving them increasing support in their struggle against imperialist schemes in the Middle East. At the WFDY's initiative the International Youth Seminar on the Struggle Against the Aggressive Military Pacts and Foreign Military Bases was held in Cairo in May 1967. Owing to Israel's imperialist aggression against the Arab countries,

the Executive Committee of the WFDY held an extraordinary session in Berlin in June 1967, at which it strongly condemned Israel and its imperialist patrons and called on young people at large to support the righteous cause of the Arab peoples and youth.

In Latin America the WFDY is supporting progressive and democratic youth movements against US monopoly domination, against the reactionary, pro-imperialist regimes, against persecution and for an amnesty for political prisoners. The federation is mobilising public opinion against the fascist military dictatorship in Greece and the reactionary, fascist regimes in Spain, Portugal and other countries.

Today the federation is giving prominence in its work to solidarity with the people and youth of heroic Vietnam. This solidarity is concretely expressed in the militant democratic principles on which the WFDY is based.

The International Committee of Solidarity with the People and Youth of South Vietnam, who are fighting against the US aggressors and their Saigon puppets for the peaceful unification of their country, was set up under the WFDY. The federation strongly condemns the escalation of the US war against Vietnam and the atrocious bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The Vietnam solidarity campaign is steadily intensifying all over the world in response to the WFDY's appeal and with the help of the leagues that belong to it. Young people are picketing and holding many rallies, demonstrations and meetings in support of Vietnam. Many youth organisations belonging to the WFDY are collecting money for the solidarity fund for the young Vietnamese people, and are sending medicine, food,



clothing and equipment to Vietnam. There was a strong public response to the proposal by the young Italian Communists to set up, with young people's help, an international hospital for Vietnamese patriots, and also to the young French people's Dollar for Vietnam campaign, and the Solidarity Caravan, set up on the WFDY's proposal and sent to various countries to demonstrate fraternal support for fighting Vietnam. WFDY delegations visited the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1966 and 1967 and conveyed messages of support and solidarity to the young Vietnamese people. The Executive Committee of the WFDY held an extraordinary session in Budapest in February 1968, at which it drew up a new programme for increasing democratic young people's solidarity with Vietnam.

The WFDY is making an important contribution to the young people's struggle for democratic rights. In collaboration with the progressive trade unions it gives constant attention to young working people's problems and the struggle for economic and social rights.

At all its assemblies, the WFDY has given prominence to the question of mobilising young people in the active struggle for peace, national independence, democracy, young people's rights and social progress.

The WFDY directly participates in planning and carrying out large-scale activities by democratic young people and students. The federation was the first international youth organisation to support the World Forum of Youth and Students held in 1961, and the World Forum of Solidarity of Youth and Students in the Fight for National Independence and Liberation for Peace in 1964 in Moscow, in both of which it took an active part.

The history of the WFDY is closely linked with that of the youth festivals, the largest event organised by democratic young people.

In connection with the Lenin birth centenary, the WFDY adopted an Appeal to the Young People of the World in May 1969, in which it emphasised Lenin's important contribution to the development of revolutionary theory, the victory of the proletarian revolution and the establishment of the first socialist state. The federation called on the young people of the world to celebrate the Lenin centenary by staging vigorous protests against the forces of imperialism and reaction for peace, national independence and social progress, and also to acquire a proper understanding of Lenin's ideas and spread them among the various sections of the young people.

The International Union of Students (IUS) is another international youth organisation which enjoys high prestige. It was set up at the First World Congress of Students in Prague in 1946 as a result of the joint struggle which the students waged against fascism during the difficult years of the Second World War. It is now the largest and most militant anti-imperialist and democratic international union of students.

No less than 87 national student organisations, about 75 per cent of all the student organisations in the world, belong to the IUS. The union's membership and influence in the international student movement have increased considerably in recent years because its principles and activities are in accord with the interests of most of the world's progressive students.

The IUS is vigorously fighting for peace, against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and is rendering enormous assistance to students in var-



ious countries fighting for independence, national liberation, sovereignty, economic progress and the development of national cultural traditions. Its struggle has made the IUS very popular and has won it high prestige among students in all parts of the world.

Student committees for solidarity with the struggle waged by the peoples and students of South Vietnam and the Portuguese colonies were set up in recent years at the IUS's initiative, and wide-scale campaigns of international solidarity with students in Venezuela, Puerto Rico, the Sudan and other countries were launched.

The IUS took an active part in the young people's and students' world festivals for peace and friendship, and in their world forums in Moscow in 1961 and 1964. It also supported the students in various activities, and organised a campaign of student solidarity with the Vietnamese people. It strongly condemned the US Government's activities, demanded the cessation of bombing of the DRV and the withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam, and calling on all its member organisations to support the Vietnamese people and render material assistance to Vietnamese patriots.

The International Union of Students annually holds the International Student Week for the struggle for peace and national independence from November 10 to 17, which ends with International Students' Day.

The Union is carrying on an enormous amount of work in drawing students into the struggle for peace, peaceful coexistence and general and complete disarmament. It also organises and takes an active part in various conferences, seminars and meetings.

In recent years the IUS organised such impor-

tant events as the International Seminar on the Struggle Against Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism and Racial Discrimination in Nigeria; the Pan-African Student Conference in Kenya, and the campaign for the elimination of illiteracy in Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil.

The IUS took an active part in a young people's International Meeting held in Leningrad in August 1967 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. With its assistance the East-African Seminar was held in Kampala (Uganda) in December 1967, which dealt with the student movement not only in East Africa but throughout the whole continent, and with the problems facing the international student movement.

One of the IUS's largest undertakings was the conference of solidarity with Vietnam, held in Prague in March 1968. The participants in the conference appealed to all the students and student organisations in the world to give greater political, moral and material support to the Vietnamese patriots and to express their solidarity in all forms, that is, at demonstrations, rallies and marches. This would help to develop and co-ordinate the solidarity movement on a nation- and continent-wide scale.

The participants in the conference called for the mobilisation of world public opinion with a view to forcing the US Government to end the war in Vietnam, to cease bombing and all other acts of aggression against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, to withdraw all US and satellite forces from South Vietnam, to recognise the National Liberation Front, the only organisation that really represents the people of South Vietnam, and to give the Vietnamese people the opportunity to



settle their own affairs without foreign intervention.

The IUS actively co-operates with the World Federation of Democratic Youth. In 1968, when the WFDY launched the World Youth Action Campaign for the Victory of the Vietnamese People, for Freedom, Independence and Peace, the IUS called on the national student unions affiliated to it to join in the campaign.

Campaigns of solidarity with the students in Portugal, Spain and Greece have also been launched in recent years.

The IUS attaches great importance to reforming and democratising education, improving tuition and student life, and helping student organisations in the developing countries to train national specialists. An example of this is the European Seminar on the Problems of the Democratisation of Education held in Ireland in 1968.

This is also expressed in the consistent policy of the IUS to increase co-operation between all the democratic forces and unite the international student movement.

Loyal to their militant democratic principles, the WFDY and the IUS are marching in the vanguard of the international youth movement. They are enjoying growing prestige among the young people and are mobilising the new generation of young democrats and revolutionaries for the struggle for a better future for young people and the whole of mankind. Their policies and practical activities are in full keeping with the basic interests of the vast majority of the world's young people and this is the token of their present and future success.

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